NEW LANTERNS IN OLD CHINA

THEODORA M. INGLIS

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By
THEODORA MARSHALL INGLIS

WITH FOREWORD BY
ISAAC TAYLOR HEADLAND

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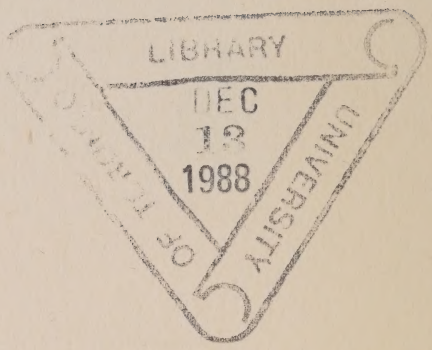

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To
YIN TAI-FU

How goes the night?
The night is not yet gone.
I hear the trumpets blowing on the height;
The torch is paling in the coming dawn.

—From a Chinese Lyric of
the 9th Century B. C.

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FOREWORD

WHILE Theodora Marshall was still a college girl, her pen had begun to spin stories. Some of these we read in Peking years ago, and have been reading at intervals ever since, those which she has written about the people with whom she and her doctor husband had expected to spend their lives.

All these years we have been waiting and hoping that some of these stories might be garnered into a sheaf and put into permanent form. And this is now to be done.

The greater number of these stories are connected with the An Ting Hospital, over which Doctor Inglis presided and in which work Mrs. Inglis was always his helpful and sympathetic companion. To this hospital Doctor Inglis gave his utmost devotion and no one was ever sent home broken in health with greater reluctance, or gave up the hope of return with more sincere regret than he did. Nor was his wife's attachment to his work less ardent than his own.

It is to be regretted that Mrs. Inglis could not have spent many years in China, for in a peculiar

way she was gifted in this, that she could enter lovingly and sympathetically into the minds and hearts of the Chinese, particularly of the women and girls with whom, naturally, she came most in contact.

It was during this time of hospital service that Mrs. Inglis gathered many of the simple and moving incidents which she has woven into a tapestry, fashioned into a mosaic, or made into a string of pearls,—as you like—for the entertainment and instruction of the boys and girls, the men and women of the world. For it is worth while to note as one reads, that she has given not only a picture of the life of the missionary in China, but the economic, social, family, and every-day life of the Chinese people as well.

It is rare that two such persons as Doctor and Mrs. Inglis are linked together on the mission field, and happily this companionship gave Mrs. Inglis the principal character for her hospital stories —"Yin Tai-fu," the doctor—and we wish that she might have lived longer in China to write more of these stories about her husband's work, in which the Chinese appear to us so vividly as human and lovable as any people in the world.

For one, I most heartily welcome Mrs. Inglis' book. It should be read by every Young People's Society in the United States, and I trust that it may be put in their courses of study. It should be read by all students interested in mission fields, by women

of the missionary societies of the various churches who must sometimes study when they are weary and find study-books dry, for this book would rest while it instructs them, and enlighten while it entertains. It should be in the young people's department of every library, and among the books of every Sunday school. I can only hope that it may have as wide a reading as it deserves.

ISAAC TAYLOR HEADLAND.

Alliance, Ohio.

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I

THE DOCTOR'S LIGHT

IT was the twenty-third of December, and a nipping cold day. The North China Road, while deceptively dusty, was at bottom a mass of deep-cut, frozen ruts, in and out of which the Doctor's springless cart wrenched and rumbled. Crash! The cart seemed dropping into space, but landed suddenly with a jar that bounced the Doctor up against the taut canvas roof. This upheaval concluded with a quick jerk on the diagonal, which hurled his bruised frame against the side and then jolted him back on the hard bumpy cushion of the cart.

The Doctor groaned; never before had he realised the exact location of every bone, muscle and sinew in his body. This anatomical knowledge may become obscure with long residence in North China, but only after the human mechanism has adjusted and calloused itself to the gymnastic propensities of the Chinese national vehicle. However, the Doctor had not yet arrived at this state of cart Nirvana; he felt depressed in body and spirit and the trip of thirty miles down into the country was certainly

anything but a pleasure jaunt. It was really much easier to get out and walk, for while afoot he could contemplate his errand with some measure of pleasure and satisfaction.

Late the night before a messenger had brought the word that Te T'sang, the young native pastor, lay desperately ill at his father's house in the village of Ping An. The new doctor in charge of the An Ting Hospital in Peking could speak very little Chinese, but sickness and human woe spoke clearly and definitely to him. It followed that when at daybreak the next morning the old Peking gatekeeper opened the great north city gate, the hospital cart, with carter, the Doctor's assistant, Ma Cher Ku, and the Doctor, rumbled through bound for the sick boy in Ping An.

Hour after hour they travelled, and mile after mile of alkali-covered landscape unrolled filmlike behind them, while the same variety of scene stretched out interminably in front and surrounded them on every side. There seemed no variation save for an occasional mud-walled village rising forlornly from the grey-whitish plain; but such only accentuated the prevailing monotony and poverty of the countryside.

With the waning day the cold increased. The Doctor felt hungry, cold and sore, and his enthusiasm, while it had not reached the zero mark as had the weather, was far from holding its first fine

glow. Ten hours and they were still en route—what a road! He smiled whimsically as the words of an army corporal came into his mind—"This country is enough to make a man lose his religion." The corporal had been transporting freight overland from Tientsin to Peking, and he had spoken feelingly. The Doctor felt a sudden sympathy for the man. What hidden wellsprings of faith must be in men's hearts to keep the waters forever fresh and running in such a land of spiritual discouragement! Would he be able to do it? There had been times of late when the vast overwhelming tide of heathenism swept him out into a troubled sea of questioning.

On the bleak country highway they had passed an intermittent but never-ending procession of these same heathen, men and women, and sometimes children; stupid, curious and hostile-eyed, many of them doing the work of beasts of burden—and not in one face could the physician catch a glimmer of the "Light." Who was he, that he had hoped to set a light where there was none? The young Doctor sighed, then suddenly shouted, "Good!" For at that moment the Chinese carter—little the worse after his uncomfortable journey—drew rein beside the fast-darkening walls of Ping An.

A few moments later, they rolled noisily through the village street and into the tiny courtyard of Te T'sang's poor home. The family dogs were first to greet the visitors, rushing forth and barking vi-

ciously; a moment later they were driven back into the shadows by an old man, who ran out brandishing a huge stick. Following him came his wife, hobbling painfully upon bound feet. These people were Te T'sang's father and mother, poor and homely as their habitation, but with a wealth of welcome upon their furrowed, anxious faces. Tremblingly they led the Doctor within the miserable, poorly ventilated hut.

"The foreign Doctor!" They had never met him, but had heard of the wonders of his skill—his almost magic in healing the sick. If only he could cure their son, their first-born, Te T'sang! "But Te T'sang was very sick, so very sick!" The mother's words were choking as she mutely urged the inevitable "welcome cup" of tea upon the Doctor and his assistant. The Doctor swallowed it as quickly as he dared, and as he did so his quiet glance absorbed his surroundings. He found himself in a mud hut containing only one room, with scarcely any furniture. The brick floor was unrelieved, save for a little pot of coals over which hung a water kettle. Across one side of the room stretched the brick bed, or k'ang, built from wall to wall, and upon the far corner of this bed lay Te T'sang, muttering incoherently.

The Doctor set his cup down hastily and bent over the sick boy, laid his fingers gently on the pulse and scrutinised the sunken face; then, strange to

say, his depression vanished. Involuntarily he lifted his head and squared his shoulders. There was a battle to be fought out in that lowly room, a battle which the Doctor had been fighting and would continue to fight while he lived—his never-ending warfare with death. "Pneumonia, the worst form," he said briefly to Ma Cher Ku, and then they set to work.

The night was a long one, but gradually it wore away, and morning dawned grey and cold. Noon came, and still there was no change in Te T'sang; he lay inert, flushed of face, breathing stertorously, eyes dull and lips blue and swollen. The Doctor worked, watched and waited, but beyond the medicine and equipment which he had brought with him there was nothing to help him in his fight. If Te T'sang recovered he must do so in that wretched room, and on the same k'ang where at night his parents and also his younger brother slept; even the Doctor and Ma Cher Ku had by turns snatched a few moments' rest lying near the sick boy. Upon arriving they had found the room filled with gas from the iron pot, and at once the Doctor had ordered it removed outside the door. After this the room was cold except for the little fire under the k'ang, and as the night wore on, growing colder every minute, the watchers were obliged to sit upon the k'ang to get from it what little heat they could.

Late that afternoon the Doctor realised suddenly

that it was Christmas Eve. He had always loved Christmas Eve, and he had meant to make their first Christmas in China a happy one; and there was Mary, poor girl, off in Peking among comparative strangers—and as for himself—well, he could be happy even in such desolation, if only Te T'sang would rally.

But the boy seemed to be sinking lower and lower. The Doctor bent over him again. Te T'sang's pulse fluttered weakly, his dark eyes were fixed luminously upon the window, and his face shone out like white marble against the dull k'ang. "He will never make the crisis at this rate!" thought the Doctor desperately, but he worked on doggedly.

And so Christmas morning came; eight—nine o'clock passed with no apparent change in the sick boy's condition. The Doctor glanced out of the little window and saw a dozen or more kinsmen and neighbours standing patiently waiting in the tiny courtyard. One spoke, "Te T'sang k'uai szu la," he said. The Doctor understood and his heart sank. Yes—"Te T'sang soon dead!" Te T'sang, who was to have borne the Word to these people, was to be taken before he had fairly begun his work. Well, Te T'sang, poor lad, how many discouragements and heartaches he would miss.

Suddenly the voices in the courtyard ceased, and the Doctor looked out again. Several of the men were standing with bowed heads, while others,

frankly curious, stared toward one side of the courtyard, where the T'sangs had moved their pot of coals, and were about to eat their morning meal. There was no table, only a flat stone around which the man, his wife and boy knelt, and on this cold stone stood their Christmas breakfast, a bowl of millet porridge—the cheapest food in China.

The Doctor watched them. They were not eating; they knelt with bowed heads and hands folded, and the old father's voice was raised in a prayer of thanksgiving. More than this, the Doctor could not understand, but he did understand the light which suddenly illumined the old man's face. It was a strange and wonderful light, for, as the tired and disheartened physician gazed, it broke over everything—the light of the "witness for him!" It transformed the dingy courtyard, flooded the cold dull room, and swept warm and healing into his own discouraged heart. Again he lifted his head, squared his shoulders and turned toward the k'ang. The Light was there also, and as the Doctor gazed closely at Te T'sang, the sick lad slowly opened his eyes, turned his head feebly toward the creaking door, and knew his mother once again. Yes, Te T'sang had weathered the crisis, and in the young physician's heart was a strange certainty of his ultimate recovery.

* * * *

Several months later, the Doctor handed his wife

a letter from Te T'sang. It narrated many interesting occurrences, among them the wonderful spread of the gospel in Ping An.

The Doctor's wife read in silence, then went over to her husband and laid her hand upon his arm. "David," she said, a little timidly, "that trip to Ping An must have been a wonderful experience for you —you seem to have found a fountain of hope and courage down in that desolate spot. I can't explain it, but sometimes, when you sit very, very still, you look as though you saw a great light somewhere."

The Doctor held his young wife off at arm's length. "I do see a great light," he said slowly. "It shines over all I do and all I hope to do, for China. It tells me not to be discouraged, that all God expects or asks me to do is not to worry for him, but to witness for him by my faith and by my works—just as Te T'sang is witnessing for him in Ping An. I first saw this light in all its fulness on Christmas Day, in that dark hour when Te T'sang seemed to be dying. Mary, the light was of his sending, and it shone out from the face of age and poverty over a bowl of millet porridge." Then the Doctor told her the story.

II

TE T'SANG'S GIFT

IT was all as fresh to Te T'sang as yesterday, the Christmas morning when, after long hours of sickness, he opened his eyes to find the Doctor bending over him with the gift of life in his hand.

Many years had passed since the then young physician had journeyed through winter's cold and stress down from Peking to the mud village of Ping An, and there through the mercy of God saved the life of Te T'sang, the country pastor; but Te T'sang had not forgotten. Every Christmas morning since that time he had taken out his ink brush and painted another short black stroke on the smoky bricks near where his pot of coals sat, each time hoping it would be the last.

But alas, the strokes seemed capable of continual addition, and Te T'sang often despaired of his heart's desire. This heart's desire was nothing more nor less than a gift for Yin Tai-fu, his beloved physician, who, after a very few years of strenuous service in China, had broken in health and been forced back to his native land.

Chinese gratitude is proverbially deep and lasting,

oft'times exhibiting itself in a life-long personal attachment. And Te T'sang's was the warm, grateful heart, not reserving itself for his benefactor alone, but through the years of their separation flowing out to his needy countrymen—indeed a veritable well-spring of kindly, unselfish deeds.

But sometimes Te T'sang knew that his heart grudged even while his hand opened. The hour after he scratched up the last cash from his first hoardings in the old brass bowl was tinged with regret. True, he had done a good deed—paid Jung Ping's fine and started the weakling over again—but his gift for Yin Tai-fu, the doctor—that was as remote as ever.

However, savings accumulated faster in those days; Te T'sang was unmarried and life as a country helper in Ping An was not wildly extravagant. His salary of four dollars a month more than sufficed for his simple needs, and in another year along with helping others, the brass bowl was again almost filled with dingy brass cash—brightened here and there with a shining bit chopped from a silver tael.

It was at this most propitious time in his finances that a really economic disaster befell big, pock-marked Te T'sang. He took three young lads from Ping An up to the boys' school in Peking and while there fell suddenly in love and soon afterwards married Wen Yen, the young nurse at the hospital.

To offset this rise in his living expenses, Te

T'sang's salary was increased to eight dollars, an ample amount had Wen Yen not been possessed of a veritable passion for transforming the mud hut in Ping An into some semblance of a home. She actually insisted upon two chairs and a table, new paper for the lattice windows, fresh matting for the k'ang or brick bed, a mud range in place of the pot of coals, while her indulgence in soap and brushes seemed to Te T'sang nothing short of wild extravagance.

However, he again emptied the brass bowl and held his peace, and to reward him there came a day when even Wen Yen seemed satisfied, but not until Te T'sang had to rub his eyes in order to recognise his former abode. Then again he began, this time surreptitiously, to put by an occasional coin. But the saving went slower than in his single days—wives are expensive luxuries, at best!

However, if there ever was a wife worth the extra cost, it was Wen Yen. She was a veritable home bird in those days, dusting, sewing, polishing and best of all, teaching the ignorant women around her the gospel of Life and cleanliness.

Meanwhile the old bowl was slowly, but none the less surely, filling and as the second Christmas after his marriage approached, Te T'sang's kindly face fairly radiated happiness. The bowl was two-thirds full—"Another Christmas!"—Te T'sang shut his eyes and actually visioned some appropriate gift

winging its way across the great ocean to his good doctor friend.

But right here, just to show Te T'sang that man must not set his heart too entirely upon any one thing, the most wonderful event in his life occurred—he became the father of a son. But the babe was weak, and for days Wen Yen seemed about to slip away out of life with him. Te T'sang's face was stoical as race and custom demanded, but his heart was wrung with terror. This time without a qualm, he turned the brass bowl upside down, shaking out the last cash. Then he and good Cousin Wang made a cushioned litter, strung it on a tried and trusty bamboo pole, the pole on their broad shoulders and walking, walking, oh, so fast but carefully, they bore Wen Yen and her babe thirty li * over the hard-frozen roads to the big hospital in Peking.

The results there were all that Te T'sang had hoped and prayed for. Two months later Wen Yen, rosy and well, with a lusty boy at her breast, sat cross-legged and smiling in a clumsy Chinese cart, while Te T'sang smiling, too—how could he help it?—sat out upon the shafts driving Cousin Wang's good mule over the golden miles back to the little home in Ping An.

The past weeks had made great demands on the brass bowl; there was scarcely a coin left in it—

---

* Li, a Chinese mile, three of which make the English mile.

well, what of it? Te T'sang was young and strong. Moreover, he had his wife and son—could he not easily save again? This he did, little by little. The brass bowl was almost filled thrice and thrice emptied, for in those swiftly flying years two more sons and a small daughter came to Te T'sang and Wen Yen. There was a real home then encompassing them, a Christian home—throwing its bright, uplifting rays far out into the squalor and ignorance of Ping An. As Te T'sang stepped over his threshold each day into his clean little home, he knew that everything in it was worth far more than it had cost—and yet that gift for Yin Tai-fu, the good doctor! Was he never to know the depth and lastingness of Te T'sang's love and gratitude?

Thinking overmuch of this as the twelfth Christmas approached, Te T'sang lapsed, for him, into long brooding silences and then it was that Wen Yen, woman-like, wrung the secret desire out of his heart.

"Ah!" Her first syllable breathed reproach, and then she laughed gaily. "Certainly we can send the good Yin Tai-fu a gift; we will both save together." And at that magic word "together," what a load lifted itself from Te T'sang's heavy heart!

"The first thing," announced Wen Yen in business-like tones, "we shall not buy any more white rice, we will use more millet; after all, it is the very best food for babies. Then I shall make our own shoes for a time; but our greatest saving will be that

I shall not ask for that new pad for the k'ang!"

Thus the day was saved and immediately the brass bowl began filling again. In fact, there was scarcely a day through the winter and spring that a brass cash failed to chink merrily down upon his brothers in the old bowl.

By early summer the bowl was filled, quite up to the brim, and when Te T'sang turned it out, he and Wen Yen together counted up the magnificent sum of five dollars!

Wen Yen clapped her pretty hands over this stupendous amount and Te T'sang smiled broadly all the way over to borrow Cousin Wang's still serviceable mule. Cousin Wang, good as ever, but very fond of his mule, laid many injunctions upon Te T'sang as to the care of this animal—it was well for Cousin Wang's peace of mind that he did not see Te T'sang fairly ripping off the miles to Peking.

That was a wonderful journey! It neither rained nor blew up a savage North China dust storm. There were no deep ruts to trip his flying steed, and although Te T'sang felt like a millionaire he was so far removed from one in appearance that he passed unmolested along the highway, through the city streets and finally into the big mission compound, where as a boy he had gone to school.

And even here nothing interfered with his long-delayed plan. The very man he wished to see, the white-haired Mu-sher who had fathered him in his

early years, welcomed him at the gate and led him into his own house.

And then! I wish that every one who appreciates a grateful heart could have seen big, blue-cotton clad Te T'sang that night after the food was taken away. He sat at his old master's desk, the lamplight falling softly upon his beaming face, his fingers trembling a little as he counted out the brass cash with here and there a precious bit of silver. And how his old master's face brightened and glowed as Te T'sang told what he wished done with the precious hoard, and how long he had been saving it.

And then after a long hour together, the old Mu-sher wrote to the far-distant doctor, telling all that Te T'sang wished in fine, polite wording, just as was quite proper. And since twelve years and over is a long time, Te T'sang must needs tell the doctor of many other people whom the doctor had known and ministered to.

But at length the letter was finished, and Te T'sang lingered for another day in Peking until he saw his savings changed into a draft. He and the old master had decided that with money the doctor could get whatever he wished without losing half of it in import duties. Then the draft was put into the letter and Te T'sang with his own hands posted it.

So at last, after long years of waiting, hoping and denying, the gift of love was on its way. An hour later Te T'sang mounted the old mule, this time re-

calling Cousin Wang's detailed injunctions, and ambled leisurely along toward Ping An. It would be late when he reached there, and the road was hot and dusty. However, Te T'sang had a remedy for the latter, this was very often to close his eyes to the flat landscape around him and revel in the old vision of his gift winging its way over the great ocean to Yin Tai-fu.

* * * *

It had been a long, hot afternoon in Dr. Insley's office and the weary doctor held back a sigh of relief as he closed the door upon his last patient. But the door was not fairly shut when the patient rapped again, a timid, hesitating rap.

So once again the door opened upon the plainly dressed workingman.

"Doctor," the man was embarrassed, but evidently determined to make his speech, "Doctor, I want to say you look like you need a rest or change. Why don't you get away from this awful heat for awhile?"

Dr. Insley smiled, the whimsical, sympathetic smile that often helped when all medicine failed. "It's change of heart I need, Simpson. It isn't work or heat that's worrying me. Besides, I am going up where my wife and boys are in a few days. It's my spirit, Simpson—it is vainly regretting the ideal of service with which I started out in life. You may not know it, but the first few years of my pro-

fessional life were spent in medical mission work in China. Ah, Simpson, there is the work! Here there is a doctor for every few hundred; there, one to tens of thousands. Here there is a hospital every few blocks; there the poor sick folks are carried in litters and baskets, hundreds of miles over plains and mountains and laid at the hospital doors. And think of it, Simpson, I stood only on the threshold of that marvellous work when I had to come home—my health failed."

"Well, now, Doc," Simpson was plainly consoling, "you sure do lots of good here—you've made a man of me!" Simpson's face flushed with painful gratitude. "I'm not the only one, either. There's a lot of your patients say you're as good for the soul, as for the body, an' souls is souls here, as well as away out yonder."

"Now, Simpson, don't you worry about me. I'm only going through what every man goes through who has been held back from his highest and dearest aim. It's a sort of rebellion that I had to give up with the race only begun. Why, out there in China where once my every hope and ambition was centred, my very name is forgotten!"

"Now, Doc, you get up in the mountains to them boys of your'n. They'll give you somethin' healthy to think on." And, plainly perturbed, Simpson went out.

But Dr. Insley scarcely noticed his departure. He

stood gazing down upon the busy city streets below. They turned suddenly hateful to him, with their dust and glare and noise. Not once did he lift his eyes to his daily joy and delight—the sun-crowned mountain peaks gleaming through the shadowy veil of distance.

How long he stood there he did not know, but at last the postman's shrill whistle roused him. Mechanically he crossed the room and picked up his letters from where they had fallen through the mail slot. One, two, three, he read hastily and threw away. As he opened the fourth, Te T'sang's draft fell to the floor. Wonderingly he picked it up, skimmed through the amazing letter, then sat down heavily in his chair and reread the wonderful words from Te T'sang—"that Te T'sang had not forgotten him; that he and many others still cherished his name; that old lame Li whose bad leg Yin Tai-fu had cut off, sold the Gospels every day, rain or shine, at the Great An Ting Gate; that young Wang, whom the doctor had healed of the dreadful throat trouble, now taught in the boys' school and every year led many of them into the Jesu light. And did the good and honourable Yin Tai-fu remember little Ma Kuniang who had the smallpox when he was there? Well, she was quite grown up now, and was a Bible woman at the hospital, doing fine work. Moreover, she had often told that Yin Tai-fu, with God's help, had healed her soul when he healed her body. Te

T'sang mentioned still others, all of whose lives were going out in widening circles of usefulness. Last of all, Te T'sang very guardedly mentioned his own—but the fine mist in the Doctor's eyes did not prevent him reading between the lines, also the old master's postscript was enlightening as to what Te T'sang and Wen Yen were doing.

"Twelve years and more, Te T'sang had been waiting to express his gratitude for what he, the Dòctor, had been enabled to do. In a way, Te T'sang was carrying on the work, also old lame Li, Wang, Ma Kuniang and others." Some of what he had sown in those brief years was, it seemed, bearing fruit a thousandfold. The Doctor's face flushed even deeper as he recalled that sometimes in those far-off days he had suffered discouragement, even as now. Suddenly into this distressing thought Simpson's words shot like an arrow of light. "Doc, you made a man of me," and "Souls is souls here as well as out yonder!" Had he done his best by the souls nearest him? Had he fully realised that when the Master shut one door, he had opened another? Well, if he had not, he would from now on, for before him was the proof that no service done in His name ever is lost.

Reverently the doctor closed his hand upon the little draft. What visible token of loving gratitude he should purchase was not to be decided hastily. It would, in fact, take long considering—but take as

long as he would—what matter? The real gift—Te T'sang's gift to his spirit—lay deep and warm within him.

Suddenly the doctor rose and strode to the window. The glare, the din, the clamour were all there below him, riotously harsh and discordant. This time, however, they passed unnoticed, for the doctor stood smiling, his face toward the mountains.

III

THE BEGGAR AT THE GATE

HE was not a nice sight, even for one as accustomed to all visible disorders of the flesh as was the young doctor in charge of the Hospital of Great Peace. Indeed, when the litter-bearers laid the filthy bundle at his feet, Yin Tai-fu involuntarily stepped back a pace.

"It is the beggar Li Ping," announced the head bearer officiously, "Li Ping who, these many years, has shown his sick leg at the North City Gate. While he was able to do this he had money to pay for his bed and his millet—but now," and the head bearer wagged his head sadly, "but now for one month has Li Ping lain in the dust by the gate too weak even to stretch forth his hand for a cash. Today the street officer ordered us to carry him out of the city and throw him by the country roadside, but we, being of exceeding kindness, bring him to you instead. I tell you, it is well for Li Ping that my heart is of such a charity, else he would now be dying under the feet of camels and mules."

"Dying!" ejaculated the doctor, who, during this

harangue, had made a hasty examination of the seemingly unconscious Li Ping. "Dying!—why, this man is dying now! His leg is gangrenous halfway up to his thigh. Moreover, exposure and starvation have so nearly finished him that he will scarcely last the day out, much less stand the amputation of such a leg as this. No," Yin Tai-fu spoke regretfully, "we can do nothing for him here—carry him back to the city authorities—they should at least bury him. I am sorry," he continued, "sorry to turn any one away, but there is nothing else to do this time. Pick up your litter and return to the city officials."

The head bearer's face fell; he hesitated a moment, then with a grunt of dissatisfaction signalled to his companion and together they raised the litter pole clumsily to their shoulders.

With this jarring motion, the beggar, Li Ping, slowly lifted his eyelids, and as the bearers went down the hospital steps, his pallid lips moved feebly and his sunken eyes rested imploringly upon the doctor, so imploringly that the latter turned hastily away and strode back into the dispensary.

"It is no use, with all this anti-foreign feeling rising, to arrange for an unnecessary death in our mission hospital. Moreover," and Yin Tai-fu demanded this fiercely of his head assistant, Cher Ku, "why take in a dying man merely to pay for his funeral?"

"Certainly such action would seem very foolish," responded the polite Cher Ku.

"It would? Well, then, that's just what I'm going to do," announced the doctor, his "Scotch" and overwhelming sympathy rising together, and, striding to the hospital gate, he called out to the litter bearers:

"Hi! Hi! Here, bring that sick man back—I'll take him in." And so Li Ping the beggar entered the Hospital of Great Peace, Yin Tai-fu with his own hands helping to carry the wretched body over to the isolation ward.

"It is useless to try to operate," he told Cher Ku, "no use at all, but we will put a little nourishment into him and then dress that leg more to cover it up than anything else."

Two hours later, Li Ping roused a little, but any appreciation of his altered surroundings was lost in feeble but blissful enjoyment of the hot broth that trickled slowly down his poor starved throat. Three days passed thus, and then, with that amazing vitality characteristic of the Chinese, Li Ping showed unmistakable signs of returning life. Yin Tai-fu, seeing this, clapped his hands together joyfully. "See him?" he asked the smiling Cher Ku, "see him? And I thought that he was a dead man! Feed him up now, Cher Ku, feed him up, and dress that leg every day—we'll operate on him yet."

And operate they did, just ten days later, and—

well, to shorten the story, at the end of three months Li Ping, smiling and in good flesh, was hobbling about upon a wooden leg.

However, during those long weeks of convalescence in the Hospital of Great Peace, some things much more wonderful than a fine new wooden leg had been given to Li Ping. Great gifts they were and how suddenly and quietly they had come to him. Li Ping's heart swelled nigh to bursting when he recalled certain things. First was the evening hour, after the arduous hospital day; this was a precious hour wherein Yin Tai-fu and Cher Ku used to sit beside him on the k'ang, and, by the flickering candle, had patiently told him many things; things at first quite incredible; yes, incredible, yet strangely tangible. For during the long nights of painful healing, Li Ping had held fast to certain strange new words of promise and of comfort, repeating them over and over when his suffering was most intense. How they helped him—those wonderful words! So much so, that almost before he knew it, the gift of faith was irrevocably his own. Then, too, there was old Father Ching, the hospital evangelist, he who later was to shed his blood for the cross. Old Father Ching it was who taught Li Ping many other things, among them how—since the Gift was his—it at once became his, Li Ping's, duty, to study and work that soon he might share it with others.

Beside these unspeakable gifts, a new leg was

small indeed—for what is a new leg to a new heart and eyes of new vision? And yet Li Ping was wont to say: "My new eyes—my new heart—and my new leg—for, had I not needed a new leg, I should never have found my new heart and new eyes!"

There was nothing selfish about Li Ping. As he studied and as he experienced many things not set down in books, he willingly shared them with others, hobbling about the hospital wards and stepping over every threshold where men were able and willing to listen.

These long spring days were undoubtedly the happiest that Li Ping had ever known, but all too soon there came sad changes. Suddenly, but after weeks of disturbing rumour of anti-foreign uprisings, mobs openly attacked several of the outlying missions in Peking. One such was the An Ting Hospital, situated near the North City Gate. This first attack consisted principally of vengeful howls and a few bricks thrown over the wall against the hospital. However, the result was that the frightened sick and convalescent left as hurriedly as possible, and daily it became more evident that the tide of anti-foreign feeling was rising alarmingly, and few there were who wished to associate with the hated foreigners.

Within two days after this attack Li Ping was the only inmate of the hospital. His countrymen and even his beloved Yin Tai-fu had urged him to

leave, but Li Ping stubbornly refused. What was turning in his heart no one knew, but he continued to hobble up and down the deserted walks and corridors, and to sit disconsolately for long hours upon the steps of the deserted hospital chapel; for even Father Ching had taken his family to what he considered a place of safety.

But it seemed that, after all, Li Ping was to share the general alarm, for when, a few days later, new rumours of danger drifted over the hospital wall, he too disappeared.

Where he went no one knew. Yin Tai-fu, however, felt relieved, for the second day after Li Ping's disappearance, he himself fell very sick. And that Li Ping was safe among his own people was the comforting thought that kept recurring to Yin Tai-fu, until his fever rose higher and higher, and he drifted far away from anything real or tangible. Well for poor Yin Tai-fu that he could not realise the increasing fury of those days! And if the days were bad, the long nights were worse. Everywhere crowds gathered and mobs threatened.

On one of these nights as the rioting sounds from the city streets floated nearer and nearer the compound wall, Yin Tai-fu's young wife fled from his bedside into the next room and knelt by her sleeping baby. But anguished prayers are brief; it was no time for long weeping, and soon Mary Insley arose and returned to her husband's side. As she did so,

she was suddenly conscious of a sound outside in the compound—a stealthy sound, and hearing it, a panic of fear clutched her heart. "The rioters!" she thought, "possibly an evil emissary sent on ahead. If so, God help them—her unconscious husband, her sleeping baby!" But here an unguessed spirit of courage surged through Mary Insley's heart—she would see for herself just what was moving so stealthily outside. With this purpose in mind and a prayer upon her lips, she extinguished the light and crept to the half-open window.

It, whatever it was, was still there. Nearer and nearer the presence came. Now and then the terrified listener could hear a faint scraping sound upon the mud brick walk and, determined to know the worst, Mary moved cautiously to the long glass door opening upon the portico and peered out.

At first she could distinguish nothing but the great yew trees and dark bushes blotched against the white compound wall. Then—Ah, she was not mistaken!—a dark head rose up from behind the flowering almonds; for a second the man paused and glanced sharply about, then on he came around the almond tree, slowly, hesitatingly, but certainly, his foot striking the mud bricks with a faint, metallic sound—nearer he came. Suddenly Mary Insley flung open the door and rushed outside.

"Li Ping!" She dropped down upon the steps, weeping uncontrollably.

When she looked up again Li Ping stood before her. "Yes, Yin Tai-tai, it is only unworthy Li Ping," he said calmly. "And did the Tai-tai and the good Tai-fu think that I would desert them in their hour of need? Never! I but went back to my old place by the North City Gate and sat begging there that I might hear the whisperings that crept in and out through the gate. And I could have learned more, but last night I heard that Yin Tai-fu was sick, with no one to guard the premises. Li Ping has returned to do what he can; by day I will do your bidding, and by night I shall keep watch. In this place," and Li Ping lifted a transfigured face in the moonlight, "in this place I found more than my life. Should my body perish here, it would be all too little for what I have received."

Only One other knew what these words meant to Mary Insley, and strange as it may seem, the uplift of hope and courage that rose upon the wings of Li Ping's grateful words, carried her wisely and courageously through the hard days that followed.

At the end of ten days of watching and nursing, Li Ping had the joy of helping his beloved Tai-fu, then convalescent, into a cart which carried him and his wife and baby to safer quarters. But Li Ping himself refused to leave the hospital compound.

And remain he did until the Boxers and their comrades in arms, the Chinese Imperial soldiery,

looted and burned the hospital and surrounding buildings.

Where Li Ping took refuge at this time no one knew, but later, after the anti-foreign uprising had been quelled and the missionaries had returned to rebuild the Hospital of Great Peace, Li Ping suddenly reappeared.

The day that his wooden leg again went tapping along the hospital walks was a happy one for Li Ping, and memorable as well, for it marked the beginning of long years of special service to his own people. In fact, there are many who cannot think of the An Ting Hospital apart from Li Ping, for there he remained for twelve years teaching, preaching and offering the Word to all who would pause to listen.

For to Li Ping it was given to reach his brother's heart as no white man could. The symbolic language of the Scripture, the Oriental figures of speech —all such parables as the Lost Sheep, the Sower of the Seed, and Lazarus starving in sight of the rich man's table—these were their own familiar experiences and pictures which, in their own tongue, Li Ping unfolded before their eyes. By hundreds his countrymen responded to his appeal, until it was rightly said that there was no such mover of hearts in all North China as was Li Ping, he who had sat as a beggar at the city gate.

And just because he had sat begging by the city

gate all those long, hard years, was Li Ping wont to speak often of another gate—a wonderful Gate—which opened upon a country brighter than the morning.

The old men and women in particular loved to hear about this far-away land, and often would beg Li Ping to tell them again of the Gate and "the brighter-than-the-morning country."

And almost as many times as there are carved sandalwood beads on a mandarin's string, did Li Ping drop this precious promise story into the withered ears of Old Wang the carpenter, Old Ming Nai-nai, the great-grandmother, aged Ku, the ex-camel driver and many others.

And, doubtless, he would have told it as many times more, but one morning when he began the Story again, a strange fluttering of the heart seized him, and the words died falteringly upon his lips.

Old Wang, noting his changed countenance, would have hastened forward to his support, but Li Ping stood suddenly upright, his eyes fixed joyously upon something far away—

"The Gate! The Gate!" he cried out confidently. And leaving these wonderful words of assurance, to comfort and sustain, Li Ping passed out from among them through the Gate he had so often told about, into "the country-brighter-than-the-morning."

IV

THE CAMOUFLAGED PRESCRIPTION

LASH! Lash! The young Mandarin's whip struck sharply and his big black mule, unused to such urge, tore up the city street, scattering the motley throng of men, women, pigs, dogs, chickens and children, in every direction.

But the blue-button Mandarin galloped on regardless; his satin-clad body straining forward over the saddle; his eyes searching eagerly ahead, as if for some not altogether familiar landmark.

Ah! At last he glimpsed it, a slender spire rising abruptly from a grey tiled roof. This spire marked the entrance of the side street leading to the hospital which he sought. Curbing his mule slightly, he turned and rode swiftly down the narrow hutung, coming to an abrupt and panting stop before the open hospital gate.

This gate, as usual at dispensary hours, was crowded with the lame and the afflicted. For an instant, the fastidious young Mandarin eyed the unsightly procession with strong disfavour, then, because every second was precious, he pushed un-

ceremoniously through it, entered the hospital and a moment later stood bowing low before the physician in charge.

With every salutation, he repeated his urgent request. "Would the foreign Tai-fu, the Tai-fu filled to overflowing with the wonderful wisdom of western medicine—Ah! what tales of his healing power were upon the lips of beggar and prince alike! Would he, the Skillful One, deign to visit his aged mother?"

"What was his honourable mother's complaint?"

"Alas, his mother was about to die! Six learned Chinese physicians had announced that she would die that day at sunset, not one minute longer could she survive!"

"Her sickness?"

"Ah, no real sickness, something much more terrible—she wished, she meant, she had planned to die. And he, her youngest son, had brought this calamity to pass. By some deceit upon the part of the matrimonial go-between, he had been married to a Christian schoolgirl, and this wretched girl had refused to burn incense to his aged mother's favourite god. Such frightful disobedience upon his new wife's part had thrown his mother into a surpassing rage, and in her fury she had committed the deadly deed."

"Well, the deed, the deed! What was it? Opium, of course." The doctor's tone was tinged

with impatience as he flung off his surgical apron and reached for the stomach pump.

But the young Mandarin lifted a restraining hand. "No, no, not opium; something much more fatal! She, his mother, had deliberately swallowed a finger ring, no jewels in it, only a plain gold ring, but bound to kill her, so the Chinese physicians had stated."

"Ha, ha, ha!" The physician threw back his blonde head and laughed. "She'll never die because of swallowing a finger ring! Go home, you do not need my services—Nature will take care of your mother. She is certain to recover."

"Never—never!" the young Mandarin lost all semblance of self-control. "Never, she is to die, it has been decreed; but if I take you, the foreign Taifu, to see her, then I can preserve my 'face' by saying that I did all in my power to save her!" A moment only the physician hesitated, but in that moment he visioned another possible opportunity for something greater than service to physical need.

"Certainly," he said, "if it will comfort you in any way, I shall go gladly." And summoning the hospital cart, he set forth, following hard after the big black mule and his rider.

Emergencies were of daily occurrence at the Mission hospital—but never, the doctor told himself, had he been summoned upon any such useless errand, per se, as this. "Might as well run for every button-

swallowing youngster!" However, there was always a chance of that "Something Else," the hope of which lay at the heart's core of everything he did for suffering Chinese humanity—a wonderful something which, when realised, more than compensated for all strain, risk and fatigue.

At this point in the doctor's reflections, the cart rolled through the Mandarin's gate and into a spacious courtyard. This courtyard was filled with flowering shrubs and around three sides of it ran an imposing Chinese mansion. Through the main entrance of this, the young Mandarin immediately and ceremoniously ushered the physician into the house, but not into the sick chamber; for in China, be it dawning life or impending death, the inevitable cup of tea must be taken before the doctor looks upon his patient. But this day, the tea-drinking ceremony was soon over! Then the Mandarin, assisted by divers uncles, aunts, cousins and servants galore, escorted the doctor across the open courtyard to the aged mother's apartment. Here the door opened upon a strange scene. The doctor beheld a magnificent hall-like room and seated upon a canopied dais at the far end, an old, old woman. The canopy over this aged Tai-tai was gay-coloured and richly embroidered, her sunken form was also marvellously clad in silken embroideries and she sat amidst all this grandeur, the embodiment of malicious enjoyment. At first she scarcely noticed the foreigner, so

engaged was she in gazing triumphantly down upon the kowtowing forms of her several sons and daughters-in-law. The general panic she had produced quite evidently delighted her.

Immediately, upon entering, the young Mandarin prostrated himself with the others. As he did so, the doctor caught his glance of swift appeal flashed toward a young girl, whose tear-stained face proclaimed her the offending daughter-in-law. It was also evident from the sidelong and hostile glances showered upon her by the other kowtowers, that she was being heavily censored. Nevertheless, there was no lack of resolution on her fine young face.

The doctor noted all these things, but at that instant his unwilling patient turned baleful eyes upon him and spat out contemptuously:

"Why bring this foreign devil of a doctor here, when wiser men have decreed that I am to die at sunset?"

"Most Honourable Tai-tai," the physician saluted and spoke boldly but with grave certainty. "You are not to die at sunset! You will live to behold many sunsets. More than this, you may live in peace and satisfaction if you will only follow my advice."

"Peace and satisfaction!" screamed the aged woman. "Peace! when my son brings a wretched Jesu follower under my roof—peace!"

When her rage finally passed, she dropped weakly

back against her carved chair. At this moment the doctor bent over her and spoke sternly, his words carrying a conviction that thrilled the old Tai-tai even against her will.

"Tai-tai, your new daughter may have strange notions, but, oh, most venerable Tai-tai, it astonishes me, that you, with your great wisdom, will try to force a Jesu follower! You, honourable lady, cannot know their peculiar ways." Here the doctor dropped his words confidently, even mysteriously, into his patient's withered ear. "You must ignore your Jesu-following new daughter, for such is the strangeness of this Jesu Doctrine, that while it often perishes from neglect, persecution and opposition only increase its power."

"Hi-yi!" screamed the old beldame. "How can I follow this advice, when I am so soon to die! Already I feel that hard golden band encircling my heart, just as the Chinese physicians foretold it would do!"

"Water, quick!" cried the physician, and before his patient realised it, she had swallowed a perfectly inefficient pill. "Now, most revered Tai-tai," the doctor bowed low, "I have the honour to assure you that instead of dying, you will soon be quite well—only," he inquired impressively, "do you really desire peace and satisfaction of days?"

"If I must live," the old Tai-tai spoke grudgingly, "I certainly long for peace, but how," she cried

angrily, "how am I to stand her, the Jesu one, in my presence?"

"That," the physician spoke with assurance, "is part of my prescription. To be well and at peace, all agitation must be removed from your honourable presence. For this reason, I advise that you place your new daughter across the courtyard from yourself. Give her separate apartments. Do not ask of her any service for your gods and, above all, let her Jesu doctrine alone! Follow this advice until the New Year, at least, and by that time, may all be well with you and your household." With these words the physician made his adieu and took his departure.

The New Year was still many moons away, but only three days after his first visit, the young Mandarin came again to the hospital. This time it was to fairly overwhelm the doctor with his thanks. "His mother had not died that day at sunset, instead, she was well and at peace. As for the prescription of the separate apartments, it was working flawlessly. Also," here the young Mandarin flushed dully, "while it was unfortunate that he had been given a Jesu follower for a wife, he hoped the doctor would pardon and forget his reflections upon the Christians. In reality, if a husband could be pardoned for such an unseemly remark, his wife possessed many virtues most uncommon among Chinese women. He had intended divorcing her, but now

so long as she behaved and his mother was at peace, he would make the best of his bargain." Here the young Mandarin sighed, a shallow little sigh, and tried hard to look like one cheated by fate.

Following this incident, an epidemic of typhus swept the city and during the long months in which the doctor's face grew lined and his body thin, there was no time more than to surmise about the old Tai-tai and her family.

However, early one morning, when the epidemic was past, the young Mandarin came again in haste to the hospital. This time his wife lay sick. The doctor's heart swelled with pity as he thought of the young Christian schoolgirl lying sick in the midst of family hostility. But possibly—although not probably, he could scarcely hope for that—but what if his camouflaged prescription had proved the veritable family remedy that he had prayed it might. At least, there was comfort in the young Mandarin's demeanour, for his utmost efforts toward composure failed to conceal his agitation. White faced and anxious, he begged not only for the doctor, but also for the services of the hospital nurse.

It was two long miles to the Mandarin's home, but there was no speed limit that morning, and very soon they rolled into the courtyard and into the presence of the doctor's former patient, the Mandarin's aged mother.

She was awaiting them with the welcoming cup

of tea, but her wrinkled hand trembled and her sharp old eyes shone soft and womanly. The doctor's heart took courage from these good signs as he hastily swallowed his tea and passed on to his patient.

In the sick room there was no lack of company. The young Mandarin hung about the door; his aged mother and three sisters-in-law were inside the room and all the women were quarrelling vociferously as to who should remain to assist the doctor and nurse. But there was little time for debate.

"One of you may remain and one only," the doctor announced.

"Then I shall remain," declared the old mother, "and my son may wait nearby—outside in the court-yard." With this, she sat down on the k'ang by the sick girl and took firm hold of the slender hand outstretched to her.

And all day she sat thus, unless when she moved in obedience to the doctor's order. All day, until towards evening when with the glow of a great joy upon her wrinkled face, she opened the door and called to the haggard-faced young Mandarin outside, "Enter now—your son, a Jesu child, is born!"

Possibly the doctor looked his surprise, for the old mother, worn with fatigue and anxiety, eyed him defiantly:

"You told me to let the Jesu follower alone," she said. "Well, I did, but the Jesu doctrine such as my daughter followed right here before our eyes, would

not let me nor any one else in my household alone! First my son was won over and I could not banish him from my presence, could I? Then my other daughters-in-law and their husbands—my sons also —and I could not banish them either, could I? So!" and here the Mandarin's mother threw up her wrinkled but still beautiful hands in a gesture of surrender, "what then, was I to do—follow or be left alone in my old age? Well, I did the only thing I knew, told my son that if his wife, my daughter here, would teach me without boasting, I, too, would study her doctrine. And I have; I learn more wonders every day. Already there is sufficient knowledge in my heart to teach this little child!" With this she bent crooning over the tiny bundle in her arms.

The room by this time had grown shadowy, but with every one smiling what need was there for light of lamps? The nurse was smiling as she always did when a little new one slipped safely over the threshold into life.

The young Mandarin was smiling also, but how could he help it? There was his venerable mother fully reconciled, chanting God's blessing upon his first-born, a son at that! And equally wonderful, there was his young wife, so newly, dearly precious —and safe—smiling up at him from where she lay on the dusky k'ang. But no smile was quite like the doctor's, rising as it did from the depths of

innermost joy. With the old Tai-tai's words echoing in his heart and her Jesu song in his ears, all strain and fatigue slipped from him, for in the realisation of such hopes as these, lay his great reward.

V

OLD WANG AND HAPPY NIGHT

"CHANGE!" Old Wang's eyes narrowed even more than nature had fashioned them, as his new son-in-law's harsh command broke the silence. "Change! Change!" Jung Ping's voice rose again, loud and peremptory, as Old Wang very carefully shifted his end of the bamboo pole from one shoulder to the other. While shifting his burden he glanced back at the oblong basket suspended from the pole. In it lay little Happy Night, with eyes closed and long, dark lashes shadowing wan cheeks. Her body seemed scarcely to lift the covering from the bottom of the basket, and, as he looked, Old Wang's heart clutched his very breath. He uttered an unintelligible guttural sound and turned again to his journey, unheeding Jung Ping's mumbled complaints from behind, as to how "he had been deceived into marrying an invalid."

Old Wang's mind was threshing out its own unhappy thoughts. "His little Happy Night, barely seventeen, and only seven months a wife, now a

wreck of a girl! Curses on the day, five years before, when he had let her go to the foreigners' school in Peking! Girls were never meant for bending over books—that was for boys. But if there was any healing in their foreign medicine, and Happy Night claimed that there was, why he would wring the last drop out of them. They should restore her to him, plump, pink-cheeked and bright-eyed, as she was the day he had weakly allowed her to turn her back on her ancestral gods. No wonder that the big blue-and-gold god fell crashing from his niche in the wall the very day she set forth to Peking! Old Wang groaned softly.

At this slight sound, Happy Night opened her eyes and looked around. On either side of her rose the rush-woven basket sides; in front, trudged the blue-clad, toil-bent figure of her father, and overhead, slit by the dark line of the bamboo pole, curved the blue, blue sky. Happy Night never tried to look at Jung Ping, her husband; his frowning face made her sad, but the wonderful sky comforted and delighted her. It stretched far above her, remote, beautiful, mysterious, and yet it encircled her softly, almost tangibly, down to the basket's very rim. By day this sky was dotted with snow-white clouds, drifting idly hither and thither, and Happy Night—all to herself, of course—loved to play that they were lost sailboats seeking shore in a heavenly sea of blue. And sometimes, when the basket swayed

gently and the rope creaked softly, Happy Night closed her eyes and she, too, went sailing far, far away with the white cloud ships above her.

But the sky was little comfort to Old Wang. Although his will was of iron for endurance and his heart all love for Happy Night, he never once looked up, but did secretly revile the earth that tore at his shoes and bruised his feet. As for Jung Ping, he grumbled constantly, and when they had travelled for two days, and the journey's end drew near, his complaint grew more rasping and insistent. Forced to listen, Old Wang set his lips anew with firm restraint, and Happy Night closed her eyes from sheer weariness; even the wonderful sky and the sweet early spring smells, stealing up from below, failed to comfort. Old Wang looked back often and anxiously; Happy Night had begun to cough again, and he hastened the pace toward the great city wall that rose grey and forbidding a few miles farther on. As they approached it, the country paths merged together, and the road lay thick with dust. Once only they rested the basket, and that was for Old Wang to cover Happy Night's little face with a square of thin cotton cloth.

At last they passed through the yawning gate that, tunnel-like, stretched for sixty feet under the great Peking wall. Once inside, Old Wang moved steadily forward, impervious to city sights and sounds. Jung Ping, on the other hand, found it all very in-

teresting and gazed around, open-mouthed, as they traversed the city sidewalk of pounded dirt, which ran six feet below the level of the traffic street.

On one side, this walk was lined with grey mud-brick buildings, many of them shops, with flaunting signs and wide-open fronts. Scores of people, mostly men and boys, hurried along, pushing and jostling against each other. Peddlers screamed their wares, filthy beggars pleaded for cash and, now and then, Old Wang veered the line of march to avoid cows in process of being milked.

Above them, on the other side, crowding the raised city street, horses, donkeys, pigs, mules and camel-trains mingled confusedly with the people in a motley but apparently endless procession.

All too soon for Jung Ping, Old Wang turned aside from these attractions and entered a narrow side street. It was quiet there, and Happy Night, realising that they were nearing the hospital, smiled under the dusty cloth. Very soon, then, Old Wang spoke, "Here is our journey's end, my child," and they passed through the hospital gate. Another moment, and Old Wang lifted the basket in his own arms, set it down carefully upon the hospital veranda, and lifted the cloth from Happy Night's face. Then he smoothed back her rumpled hair and straightened her garments with tender, toil-hardened hands.

This was the first glimpse that the doctor had of

Old Wang, and it pleased him. If only the doctor had pleased Old Wang as well! As it was, the latter braced himself for the meeting, and drew a deep breath, after his perfunctory salutation, with his hands clenched in his long sleeves. Queer feelings were struggling in the old man's heart, a natural dislike of the foreigner, some elements of fear and admiration, along with hope and a determination to get every possible good out of him for Happy Night. But the doctor's eyes left Old Wang immediately, and passed to Happy Night. For a few minutes he bent over her in close scrutiny, then turned to Old Wang. He did not speak at first, but when he did, it was in the native tongue, and there went with it a look of sympathy and compassion that dropped like a plummet to the depths of Old Wang's heart.

But Old Wang had no intention of yielding this citadel to the foreigner; nor were his fears allayed when they bore Happy Night inside the hospital and examined her carefully. This done, the doctor turned again—always to Old Wang.

"Where is her mother?"

Old Wang threw up his calloused hands. "Her mother is dead ten years!" Then he pointed to Jung Ping, and added, "This man is her husband, and I am her father!"

"Ah!" The doctor glanced thoughtfully from one to the other. "Which one of you will remain with her? She may be here several weeks."

"I, of course," said Old Wang so quickly that Jung Ping was spared a reply. "I will stay, and Jung Ping shall go home to his corn field."

"Certainly, my most honourable father has spoken wisely," broke in Jung Ping. "I shall go home, but first I must be shaved and pay my respects to some old friends. Possibly I may go to the Temple Fair, for it is long since I visited the city, and there is much to see—I shall go now, immediately!" And lifting and lowering his clasped hands in careless adieu, with not even a glance toward Happy Night, Jung Ping flashed out through the gate on his way to the Temple Fair.

So it was that only Old Wang stayed on and cared for Happy Night. The hospital was full, but a tiny room, off in one corner of the court, was found for them. In it, Happy Night lay on a small brick k'ang or bed, well padded to keep her poor little bones from breaking through, and Old Wang slept on a bench over against the other wall. Some nights, after every light was out and the compound was still, he would feel his way across to the restless Happy Night, and, kneeling down on the brick floor beside her, would hold and rest her in his strong old arms for hours at a time. However, no one ever knew of this, save Happy Night and One Other. This "One Other" seemed to be very near sometimes, and Old Wang felt His presence even while he thrust Him away. But Happy Night talked of

Him more and more as the days passed, and every inch of hospital air was pregnant with His Word.

Wherever Old Wang went, about the compound or into the wards, men were reading or speaking of Him. Even at the hospital gate there was a chapel, where the patients crowded every morning long before the opening hour. There they sat, many with rapt faces, listening to an old man, a venerable old man, with white beard, who first read the Word, and then spoke of the Giver. At first, Happy Night's father had disdained this place, then curiosity was his undoing. He ventured across the threshold to see what was going on, and thereafter went every morning. He began to appear, also, in the wards at the hours when the doctor and the native evangelist visited, and often the doctor caught Old Wang following him stealthily about from place to place. On such occasions, the doctor, being wise, gave no sign. "Hungering and thirsting" was Old Wang, though he knew it not.

In the tiny room, Happy Night grew weaker but happier every day. Her father no longer frowned when she drew forth a small book, which sometimes she read aloud, but which more often she clasped to her breast, and in low, sweet tones, repeated page after page of its contents—Old Wang had never heard such things.

"I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life!"

"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

What a message for poor Old Wang, who at last realised that no earthly medicine could ever cure his Happy Night! It was strange that he felt no resentment, where his fierce old spirit had expected to ravage if his child could not be restored to health and strength. Others besides Old Wang knew that each day the shadow was drifting closer to little Happy Night; the doctor had known it from the first, and as the time grew short he redoubled his efforts for her ease and comfort. The doctor's young wife knew it also, and often she visited the little room, carrying delicacies for Happy Night's failing appetite, and Old Ming Nai-Nai, the nurse, knew it, and she left the doctor's pink-and-white baby to bathe Happy Night, and brush out her beautiful blue-black hair. And others knew and came, all offering to help Happy Night and Old Wang, in unheard-of Chinese fashion. At first, Old Wang sought their eyes and sifted their speech for the motive. Later, as he grew in understanding, he marvelled much. "This, too, 'Giving without receiving,' was part of their strange, but wonderful, new doctrine." "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"—these words rang constantly in his ears. Ah, if only he knew where to go—how to reach Him! But explain

as many did, eagerly and gladly, Old Wang failed to grasp even the hem of His garment.

So the days passed, until seven weeks had measured their length. Easter had come and gone, but once more, on a sweet May evening, Happy Night told her father the Easter Story, after which she had fallen asleep, a faint smile upon her lips. But at midnight, she raised herself suddenly and called, in strong, clear tones: "Father, rise and open the door! —a guest stands outside and knocks!"

To please her, Old Wang opened the door a crack and peered out. "No, my child, no! Go to sleep!" And he bolted the door and tucked the bed covering snugly around her. A little later, she called again:

"Father, surely you hear the knocking! Do hasten and open the door!"

Again Old Wang stumbled to the door, opened it half-way, and once more searched the darkness. "No one is knocking, Happy Night—who would come at such an hour? Now go to sleep!" And Old Wang turned to his bench with strange questionings for company.

But just before dawn she called him again, this time insistently: "Father, there *is* some one knocking—oh, so loud! Do not keep our Guest waiting; open the door and bid Him enter."

Old Wang, stirred to his spirit's depths, strode to the door, flung it wide, and, saluting the darkness as though welcoming a king, he cried:

"Enter, I entreat you! Come in! Whoever you are, whoever stands outside and knocks, come in!"

A moment's deep silence ensued during which Happy Night, flushed and eager, leaned forward on the k'ang. Then Old Wang with strange, uplifted face fell slowly back as if before an advancing guest. Turning her eyes toward her father, Happy Night spoke softly and very happily: "It is well, my father! Our Guest is here, you have let Him in."

Then she turned her face away from the open door and fell asleep.

* * * *

Old Ming Nai-Nai, coming at sun-up with a bowl of broth for Happy Night, paused abruptly before she reached their door. This door, always open so early, was closed, and on the stone doorstep sat Old Wang, his head buried in his arms. Ming Nai-Nai moved nearer, pityingly. Old Wang heard her and lifted his head; he looked at her strangely and spoke strangely, but Ming Nai-Nai knew what he meant.

"Yes, she has gone," he said slowly. "Happy Night has gone, but she would not go until He came to be with me. I did not know how to go to Him, and last night He knocked three times before I let Him in. Happy Night heard Him every time, and she would not go until I, myself, opened the door wide and bade Him enter. Now He is here for

evermore!" And looking up, his weather-beaten face transfigured into something fine and beautiful, Old Wang, with an indescribable gesture, laid his hand upon his heart.

VI

THE BUDDHIST PRIEST

THE old Chinese Buddhist Priest approached the mission hospital cautiously. He was a wary old fellow, and although in sore distress did not mean that the foreign devils should take him by surprise.

So he limped along, pausing now and then to rest his aching leg and also to survey the crowd thronging hospital-ward. In this slow fashion he reached the hospital gate, but here his usual bravado failed him; he accosted a silken clad merchant.

"Was it safe to venture inside, to pass under the strange and possibly devilish symbols carved in the stone arch of the portal?"

"Yes, quite safe," the merchant assured him respectfully; as for the symbols, they meant nothing more than the name of the hospital—the "Hospital of Great Peace"—and no possible harm could come to him therein. He could speak from experience for his only son had been healed in the hospital of a terrible affliction.

"Certainly, it is safe," chimed in a roughly garbed man, a huge Manchurian camel driver. This man

knew, for he never failed to come for a little medicine before starting northward with his tea-laden caravan of camels. It was a long, hard journey, as they well knew, days and weeks upon the road far up into Russia, but the foreign Tai-fu's "Yao" kept him in perfect health all the way there and back again. "Yes," the camel driver was even "willing to swear that not a hair of the priestly head should be harmed."

Now, the Buddhist priest was close-shaven as a coolie's cupboard is bare, yet none of the three noted the incongruity of this assurance. Rather it was the final convincing argument, and flanked by the merchant on one side and the big Manchurian on the other, the priest passed safely through the hospital gate, up a flight of steps and down a long portico leading to the main entrance of the hospital.

As they followed the slowly moving crowd, the Buddhist priest gazed curiously about and then it was that he received the shock of his life. For a priest, such as he, to gaze upon a foreign woman meant certain defilement and there was actually one of these contaminating creatures approaching from the other end of the portico.

But the Buddhist priest was human; he had never even glimpsed the feminine foreign devil and the temptation to stare was extreme. To gaze and not *seem* to gaze—how should this delicate feat be accomplished? The wily old priest solved it in a

trice by covering his eyes with one hand, then spreading his fingers and peeping out between.

The foreign woman, who happened to be a hospital nurse, saw these beady black eyes staring at her through the dirty finger slits, but she gave no sign and passed on into the women's wing of the hospital. However, she and the old priest were destined for a nearer acquaintance.

Two hours later, owing to some emergency, the nurse was called into the operating room where the Buddhist lay upon the table. It was a frightful ordeal for the old priest, and only the excruciating pain in his leg made him endure her defiling presence.

Moreover, he would take no anesthetic. From the doorway the camel driver and merchant urged him to do so, but he insisted that, "if the foreign Tai-fu killed him, he meant to stay awake and see it done."

So with stoical calm, he lay there, a marvel of physical endurance. His leg was laid open to the bone, cleansed and dressed, yet never once did he groan or remove his spread fingers from his eyes, through which he watched the nurse as she moved about, deftly assisting the physician.

After it was all over, the priest felt strangely weak, even unable to lift his head.

"Can you remain here in the hospital for a week or ten days?" inquired the doctor. The old Buddhist priest longed to shout "No," but crafty from the

long habit of years he decided to stay until entirely cured. An unexplained confidence in the foreign Tai-fu had taken hold of him, and if the old abscess in his leg could be healed, why later he would laugh in his sleeve—being just that much ahead of the foreign devils.

"Send for my servant!" was his ungracious reply to the doctor's kind inquiry. So the servant was sent for and thus it came about that he and his master were installed in one of the courtyard rooms of the mission hospital.

But the leg was long in healing. Neither ten days nor two weeks completed the cure, and even when the priest was limping around on crutches, there seemed no reason why he should hasten his departure from the hospital.

Strangely enough, his environment was fast becoming intensely interesting, quite like a new world looming up before an aged, sea-weary mariner. Over a low partition wall to the south of the hospital was the Boys' School, where there was always noise, frolic and the peculiar droning of Chinese lads in hot pursuit of knowledge. In this school, the priest learned, boys of his own race were actually being taught to think and investigate for themselves! Astonishing, and yet—how fine it would have been to be a boy again, with a Chinese boy's new chance for life and learning.

Then there was the wonderful attraction of the

hospital itself and the marvels of healing accomplished there; also the foreign Tai-fu who performed these wonders, and even the foreign nurse, at whom the old priest no longer gazed through spread fingers. He had watched this woman stealthily—even followed her about when she did not dream that he was near, then heroically decided that defilement could not come from one who spent her days and nights doing good.

But Old Ching really had most to do with this changed attitude. Old Ching was he who presided over the hospital chapel and daily therein expounded the Jesu Doctrine to the hundreds who visited the hospital.

Old Ching never wearied of explaining the peculiar new doctrine, silly, it had seemed at first to the priest of Buddha; a doctrine wherein there was no money-getting or deception, but on the other hand, the free gift and the straight word. And this was not all; the climax of the strange teaching coming when Old Ching insisted upon *belief* in a man called Jesu.

As the days drifted into weeks, the priest learned more and more of this Jesu; more and more of his strange commands, such as doing good unto all men, even enemies, without hope of reward; and what was equally unheard of—"the honouring of women!"

By this time the Buddhist priest had discarded

his crutches but still he lingered, sitting daily with Old Ching, and with eyes and ears testing these new principles of life, as they were lived out by the foreigners and native Christians in and around the Hospital of Great Peace. What was transpiring in his old sin-seared heart he himself could not have said, and then quite suddenly one day he knew.

This was when the doctor sent for him to tell him that his room was needed for others and that he must go home.

"Home!"—his home was a crumbling Buddhist temple—Could he return to the old temple, its halls and gloomy corridors filled with mystery and deceit; could he go back to tricking and robbing poor old men and women; could he again become a part of the vile and riotous life that went on in the big courtyard behind the Temple?

He stood and gazed dumbly at the doctor.

"Don't you wish to go?" inquired the physician kindly, laying his hand upon the old priest's shoulder.

"I must go from here, I know that I must," the priest spoke with slow solemnity and then he smiled, "but I shall never go back to the Temple. My years of life have been long and full of evil—only a few short years remain—my knowledge of Jesu is small like the dust in Buddha's palm, but every day I shall enter these walls to learn more of this Jesu Doctrine and every day I shall go forth to tell it. I shall seek out, first of all, the old men and women,

whom in the Temple I have robbed and deceived. The Jesu Truth has been given to me freely and so shall I give it to them and"—here the priest became impressive,—"when they behold me, a Priest of Buddha, giving them *without money and without price,* they will believe."

And of a truth, as the Buddhist Priest prophesied, so they did; not only the old, but also the young and middle-aged. Indeed, many who had scorned good Old Ching's pleading and even been guilty of persecuting Christian neighbours, harkened to this unheard of new evangel, and followed eagerly in the way he pointed.

Strange—but he who formed the human heart knows *why* the torch of Truth never shines brighter nor more alluringly, than when held aloft by one who has turned from darkness unto light.

VII

THE RETURN

MRS. CHIN, formerly Chin Nai-nai the nurse, and having been discharged in disgrace for faults ugly and numerous as the thongs in a slave-driver's whip, she, being the bold one, had the audacity to make a purely social call upon Lin Tai-tai, her former mistress.

From some source, then unknown, Chin Nai-nai had procured a few silver taels, and was thus enabled to arrive in state. She had planned that the visual impact of her grandeur should be tremendous. And it was, for not only was she seated in cross-legged arrogance within a brass trimmed cart, but the cart was actually drawn by a mule, that height of equine elegance in northern China.

Ah, but Mrs. Chin was the wily, revengeful one, and while she came primarily in the interests of her "face," or self-pride, she came also to plant the seeds of anxiety and distress in Lin Tai-tai's tender heart.

"Has Lin Tai-tai"—by this time the undesired caller was seated and delicately blowing her cup of

tea—"has Lin Tai-tai heard of the good fortune of my orphan niece, the Chao Kuniang?"

Lin Tai-tai's eyes shone—the previous year Chao Kuniang had been her special charge; she was a graceful young slip of a girl, wayward but lovable, and loving her in return. So Lin Tai-tai turned glad eyes upon her guest; "Good fortune for Chao Kuniang, how beautiful! What can it be?"

Mrs. Chin smiled boldly. "Hi-yi, but Chao Kuniang is the fortunate one! An object of envy is she; she has become the little wife of a Manchu official, a blue-button mandarin. Hi-yi, but his mansion is filled to overflowing with chests of silver and wonderful garments of fur and embroidery. He has two other wives, but Chao Kuniang is his latest pet. Chao Kuniang is very happy, but why shouldn't she be?"

Lin Tai-tai sat stunned and Mrs. Chin swept on triumphantly. "Such luxury as my dear niece lives in, such delicate food—a bird's nest every day, such silken garments and—such idleness!" Mrs. Chin cast rapturous eyes heavenward.

Lin Tai-tai rose, pale and trembling. "You—you have dared to do this with a Christian girl!" she said, and then controlling herself, added, "but Chao Kuniang cannot be long content in such surroundings; she is certain to return to us some day—where is she?"

The old Chin Nai-nai rose, smiling slyly. "The

Chao Kuniang will never return if she has the sense of a donkey. And does the Lin Tai-tai think that after arranging this delicate and important affair, I shall reveal where the kuniang may be found?"

A long moment Lin Tai-tai and Chin Nai-nai, the nurse, measured each other. It would be like finding a certain hair in a camel's hide to search for Chao Kuniang in the blinding intricacies of that ancient city. This Lin Tai-tai knew only too well, so opening the door she motioned the wretched go-between out of the house.

As for Chao Kuniang, she of the shining hair, lustrous eyes, rosy lips, slender hands and feet; Chao Kuniang, the lovable, wayward one, what of her? A foolish bird caught in a silken net was she. Servants to fetch and carry for her, chests of silken garments for her dainty form; rings, bracelets, ear-rings; even precious jade butterflies for her hair, and golden embroidered shoes for her little feet that must scarce be set to earth, but all day rest idly folded on the satin padded k'ang.

Chin Nai-nai, who had negotiated all this elegant wickedness, boasted that she, Chao Kuniang, was happy, but was she? How could she be happy when, knowing the better way, she had deliberately entered the same compound with two other wives?

True, she had her own little courtyard, but in the absence of the mandarin, her privacy received scant respect. The eyes of the fragile first wife, piteous

and red-rimmed, haunted Chao Kuniang long after they chanced to meet her own. The eyes of the second wife openly scorned her, while at every opportunity she hissed in Chao Kuniang's ear, "Enjoy to-day, little fool, for to-morrow or to-morrow or to-morrow, your silken robes will be given to another!"

However, almost the worst drop in her cup was when Chin Nai-nai appeared, and informed her maliciously that she had told Lin Tai-tai all, save her, Chao Kuniang's, whereabouts. Then, indeed, did the silken walls of the little wife's prison close down upon and around her almost to suffocation. Chao Kuniang's heart cried out for the old days of innocency and Lin Tai-tai's love, but there seemed no way to regain these precious lost possessions, and so she sat upon her satin k'ang all day, making a brave attempt at cheerfulness, and failing utterly. The thick-necked mandarin observed these signs, and at once sought out the wily Mrs. Chin.

"What kind of little wife is this you have sold me?" he stormed. "I desire amusement, and this Chao Kuniang sighs by day and weeps by night. You shall have her back again, and that right quickly."

"Patience, Honourable Sir, patience!" cried Mrs. Chin, frightened but resourceful. "Possibly your Honour does not know that Chao Kuniang was once a Jesu follower. However, living with you,

the evil influence of the Jesu doctrine is bound soon to leave her."

"Aha! A follower of that Jesu!—this is news to me," said the mandarin slowly and he rode away in deep thought.

And the more he thought, the more he feared. At that very moment he was in secret connivance with the imperial power for the immediate extermination of all foreigners and their followers, and this last term included all native Christians. However, the old mandarin did not worry about their fate; what troubled him was an added edict that any Chinese found aiding or harbouring a single one of these Jesu followers should be slain upon the spot.

No wonder that the mandarin sighed and tried to think of a way out of his latest domestic entanglement, but the only thought that readily responded was painful. It was of how many silver taels he had paid the rascally Chin Nai-nai for a little wife, a Jesu follower, who must be disposed of within a few hours, or even in less time. Who knew but already some jealous official friend had discovered what he was harbouring under his roof—and if any such discovery had been made—"Ugh!"

However, by the time his brass-trimmed cart rolled through his own gate, Sir Mandarin had formulated a neat little plan. The Chao Kuniang was to be quietly but summarily abducted from his premises, and her future silence assured. By way

of precaution on the way in, he paused to whisper a few words into the ear of Old Wang, the gatekeeper. This done, he hastily summoned his confidential steward and with him retired to the inviolate privacy of his own apartments.

Perhaps it was the beautiful early moonlight night which tempted Chao Kuniang to wander up and down her little courtyard—but more probably it was discontent of soul. For once, she seemed unobserved, and as she strolled, she noticed that the hateful little gate opening into the mandarin's court stood slightly ajar. This opening annoyed Chao Kuniang; she tiptoed nearer to close it; then, being a Chinese girl and curious, she pushed the gate gently and gazed in upon Sir Mandarin's private realm.

It was beautiful in there, fragrant flowers and blossoming shrubs, great trees, quaintly carved urns dripping dusky vines, and loveliest of all, a tiny shimmering pool whereon the water lilies slept.

How beautiful! Chao Kuniang, who loved beautiful things only too well, drew a long breath of admiration—then suddenly she stepped back into the shadows, listening intently.

As she stood there, strange and terrible words descended to her from a small, high window in the mandarin's apartment. Oddly enough, Chao Kuniang did not hear her own name mentioned, but she did hear something much worse, in the calm voice of the old mandarin.

"Before the temple gongs sound in the morning, there will not be a foreigner, nor a Jesu follower left alive in this city," he announced.

Only a few words, but the mandarin's little wife had heard enough. "Lin Tai-tai was to be killed, her husband, her little one—all were to be slain!" Ah, how the Chao Kuniang's heart pleaded for forgiveness as she rushed back to her rooms, tore off her silken garments of shame, pulled the rings from her fingers, the gems from her little ears, and, clad in a plain, dark garment, stole out into the night with only one purpose before her.

How Chao Kuniang gained the big outer gate without discovery was remarkable, but she did, slipping through the mandarin's own courtyard, and parleying a long moment with Old Wang before he unbarred the gate sufficiently for her to glide through into the shadowy by-street.

When she had gone, Old Wang chuckled softly and fingered a priceless jade butterfly under the moon. Only an hour earlier, had not the mandarin whispered to him: "The Chao Kuniang, whom I have recently acquired, may be leaving to-night, see that things are kept quiet." Well, he had kept things quiet—and was the better off by a piece of valuable jade; doubtless his master would reward him also. Hi-yi! There were leaner jobs than gate-keeping for men of wisdom and discretion.

While Old Wang chuckled over his jade, Chao

Kuniang sped on flying feet down the hu-tung * and out upon the Great Street. For a moment the wide city highway lay strangely silent and deserted, then like sudden thunder, a terrible clamour arose. Chao Kuniang uttered a woeful cry. There, not over a li † away, and plainly visible under the bright moon, a wild, vengeful mob, whose broad swords flashed under flaming torches, was rushing through the big city gate and sweeping up the Great Street itself! Chao Kuniang did not wait to see more, but, terrified, fled before its advance.

Not more than a half hour later, in a mission compound near the north city wall, Lin Tai-tai, perplexed by the fiery glow in the sky to the south, had just called her young husband, Lin Mu-sher, from his study, when suddenly the outer door burst open and Chao Kuniang stood upon their threshold.

Chao Kuniang, but how changed! Pale and trembling, her hair dishevelled, no shoes on her little feet, her stockings torn and bloody, her hands pressed close over her pounding heart, she stood trying to utter articulate words. Lin Tai-tai gave a cry of gladness; "the Chao Kuniang had returned!" It was sadly evident that she needed help and comfort—but she had come back, and in a second, Lin Tai-tai's arms were around her.

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* Hu-tung—side street.

† 3 li—1 mile.

But the young girl pushed her away. "Fly!" she cried chokingly. "Fly—you, Lin Mu-sher, your baby—oh, fly! The awful mob is coming up the west Great Street. They are killing all foreigners and burning their homes! If only you can reach the eastern Great Street, maybe you can find the foreign quarter, where the foreign soldiers are. Surely they will help us—come, oh, come!"

With her last words, Chao Kuniang snatched the baby out of the crib, and staggered through the door. Lin Tai-tai, weak from a recent illness, stood dazed and trembling, but Lin Mu-sher, with terrible and sudden realisation of what had happened, threw his arm around her, and half supporting her, hurried after Chao Kuniang.

But the narrow hu-tung leading to the east street was long, and before they reached the opening, they heard the forerunners of the mob, shrieking and howling their way in at the other end.

"Oh," cried Chao Kuniang in anguish, yielding the baby to Lin Mu-sher's sudden demand. "Oh!" and she wrung her hands as she stumbled along. "To think that for such a wretch as I, you all may die!"

These words roused Lin Tai-tai. "Do not say that, Chao Kuniang. Do not, after what you have done this night! We are not sorry we came to you, nor is the dear Lord who sent us. He knows your heart, knows that you were only as a child entering the path of light. To Him, Chin Nai-nai's sin is

hardest to forgive!" and Lin Tai-tai, even as they hurried along, reached out and touched Chao Kuniang tenderly.

These words and Lin Tai-tai's caress lifted Chao Kuniang's sad heart; she might have spoken, but just then the fugitives turned upon the Great Street. With the turn, came the thought that possibly they could gain time and distance while the mob burned and looted the vacated mission property behind them.

With this in mind, Lin Mu-sher moved faster and faster. In one arm he bore the wondering baby, and with his free hand pulled Lin Tai-tai along in cruel haste. The latter, in her turn, held to Chao Kuniang, lagging sadly upon her bruised and bleeding feet.

On and on they fled, keeping well within the shadows of the shop fronts. Fortune seemed to favour them; the howls of the mob had diminished for the moment, and their hearts gathered courage. After all, the foreign quarter might be a possibility. This glad thought overshadowed pain and fatigue. Then suddenly out of the darkness a huge shape hurled itself forward, a bright blade flashed, and a half-naked savage ran shrieking to join his followers.

Lin Mu-sher was staggered for the second, but the baby was safe in his arms. Lin Tai-tai also was safe, for she was pulling at his hand and crying, "Oh! Oh!" Then he saw what had happened:

Chao Kuniang had fallen, pierced by the Boxer's sword.

Right in the beaten path she lay, gasping for breath. Lin Tai-tai hung over her frantically and Lin Mu-sher, laying the baby down, tried vainly to staunch her wound.

But Chao Kuniang cried: "Go! Go! Leave me!" and then as her breath grew suddenly faint, she looked up at Lin Tai-tai and asked piteously, "Will He forgive?" Lin Tai-tai's sobbing reply was whispered in her ear. With it, a great peace stole over the dying girl's face, and a long moment later she slowly lifted her eyes to the bright moon overhead. It was a beautiful moon, high up in the deep blue sky, with fleecy clouds drifting over its edge, and Chao Kuniang's eyes continued to rest upon it until Lin Mu-sher, his heart wrung with mingled emotions, gently pressed down her eyelids. Then, lifting the slender form of Chao Kuniang, he laid it upon the wide upper step of a shop front.

By this time, the howls of the mob again rent the air, and there was not a second to be lost. Lin Mu-sher picked up the baby and, dragging Lin Tai-tai from Chao Kuniang's side, they made their slow and perilous way through alley and street until, by some miracle, just before dawn, they found safety in the city's foreign quarter.

And that dawn! How fearfully it must have broken over the wicked old city of Peking! What

awful sights it revealed! What countless homes, schools, hospitals, and churches were in ashes! What mangled wrecks of precious human bodies lay strewn upon the blood-soaked streets!

How the old dawn must have shrunk from its accustomed task that day! But when it fell upon Chao Kuniang, there was nothing to fear. Indeed, could Lin Tai-tai have seen her then, she must have been comforted, for Chao Kuniang still lay quite undisturbed upon the wide shop step, her slender hands folded over her breast, her long, dark lashes drooping softly—every beautiful feature and bodily lineament, and her troubled, wayward heart, at rest in the exquisite tranquillity of one who had found her Saviour.

VIII

THE PRODIGAL SON

IN the Ku mansion, the k'angs were soft with rare old rugs; golden clocks chimed melodiously from every possible table and shelf; satin portières exquisitely embroidered swayed in the doorways; camphor chests bulging with mink and sable garments rose high as the ceilings, while other heavier iron-bound chests filled with countless silver taels, slept snugly beneath the mud-brick floors. In short, the Ku mansion was a splendid and wonderful place—yet the heart of its master, the aged Ku Mandarin, was as sick as any beggar's.

Ku Er, his second and youngest son, stood before him, not only wilful and unrepentant but worse, the youth of his handsome countenance already stamped with marks of dissipation.

"My life is my own to live!" boasted Ku Er defiantly and with sad lack of reverence; "my own, and I declare that I will not live on here after the manner of my elder brother, moving in a circle of proper behaviour from one moon to another. Such a life strangles me! Give me my inheritance and be rid of me! Give it to me that I may go forth into the

world and there do as I please; but I promise you, honourable parent," and Ku Er laughed impudently, "that the time spent at the tombs of my ancestors shall be," here he blew lightly upon his closed thumb and forefinger, "shall be like a feather's pause before the wind!"

What further insult Ku Er might have added, no one knows, for at this juncture the aged Ku Mandarin, white and shaking with rage, cried out:

"Even so it shall be, thou undutiful son, unworthy descendant of revered ancestors! Summon hither the proper officials and receive thine inheritance: so many silver taels, so many pieces of gold and jade, so many garments of satin and fur. Take them all and depart, but come sickness or come sorrow, never again cast thy disgraceful shadow across my gateway!"

And thus it happened that Ku Er fared forth from his father's house; upon his handsome face a fine bravado, but in his heart a strange surprise that his fond and long-suffering parent had actually cast him off.

However, Ku Er was young and the sense of sudden freedom was somewhat intoxicating. At first he was embarrassed by the excess of his chattels, but not for long. A week's gambling and his magnificent robes of silk and fur were gone forever. His jade and gold soon followed, and within a month his silver was reduced to a paltry sum. At

this stage, it occurred to Ku Er that change of location might alter his luck. No sooner thought of than done; and with his remaining silver changed into tael notes, he turned his reckless face toward the port city, a hundred miles distant.

Now habit is strong, and Ku Er, accustomed to the best, had by dint of bribery secured for himself a private compartment in the already overcrowded train. Fancy then the poor but arrogant youth's surprise to find a white man, evidently a foreign military official, already in possession of the compartment. This situation, however, did not daunt Ku Er, who at once exhibited his ticket and unabashed stated his claim. But the astute conductor made short work of Ku Er's demand by declaring his ticket a spurious one, and announcing that the compartment belonged solely and wholly to the foreign official.

Thereupon Ku Er turned sullenly toward the door, but the officer arose hastily from his seat and addressed Ku Er in his own language:

"I beg of you to remain where you are," he said courteously, "the train is crowded and there is ample room here for both of us; also room for your luggage, mine can be moved into a much smaller space."

And to his own surprise, also partly because he felt justified, Ku Er had accepted the foreign man's invitation to share the compartment.

A hundred miles is a long distance when travelling upon an antiquated Russian train, but Ku Er had plenty to think about. There was his inheritance already practically dissipated and gambled away; his kindly elder brother estranged, and, saddest of all, his old father alienated forever. Weaving in and out amongst these painful thoughts was another entirely different: What manner of man was this across from him—a stranger, a high official, Ku Er knew this from his uniform, "but most certainly a peculiar man, for where in all the Empire, could be found a Chinese official who would not have had him, Ku Er, punished for even presuming to claim the compartment in question?"

Certainly such behaviour as the foreigner had exhibited was passing strange, and the more he considered it, the more Ku Er was inclined to think that such a code of etiquette might serve him well in the strange city whither he was bound.

And when within a few miles of his journey's end, Ku Er arose and bowed his graceless young head before his companion. "May I inquire," he asked politely, "where is to be found the honourable foreigner's rule of conduct that teaches such behaviour as you have shown my unworthy self this day? Such a politeness upon the part of our Chinese officials is unknown."

"How fortunate!" the officer smiled pleasantly, "that I have with me the very book containing this

and other such rules; moreover this copy is in your own language," and the officer drew forth a small volume.

"Here," he said, after a moment's searching, "is one of the rules to which you refer," and Ku Er read these words:

"Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

Ah, that was like and yet so unlike one that Ku Er had learned in childhood:

"Do not unto men as you would not that men should do unto you."

At a glance, Ku Er saw where the stranger's rule might easily win him ten friends to the older Chinese precept's one. Moreover, the little book doubtless held many others equally as worthy of study.

"May I inquire," he asked again, more politely than ever, "where I may purchase a copy like the one in your honourable possession?"

"They are sold in only two of the city shops," replied the official, "and fearing that you may be unable to find these places, I beg of you to accept my copy; I have several others, and if you find pleasure and profit in these pages, I shall be well repaid."

Ku Er had accepted this unusual gift, not only because of the foreign official's sincerity in offering it, but also because he had a great curiosity to study the white man's complete code of manners and behaviour.

That first night in a strange city, housed in a shabby inn, and bereft of his boon companions, Ku Er sought his room unusually early. There was time to spare, so he opened his new book and began to read.

What he found must have interested Ku Er, for not only that night, but the next and the next, he sat in his room reading and studying the open pages of the little black book.

* * * *

Ten months had flown over the Ku mansion, rather ten weary dragging months for the fast aging Ku Mandarin. Elder brother, Ku Ee, for all his virtues, was a dull companion; however, not so dull but that he noted something sadly amiss with his revered father. Possibly it was the years piling up, but why so recently should Ku Mandarin lie long daylight hours upon his k'ang—or why lean so heavily upon his staff?

Ku Ee urged calling in the Chinese physician, but Ku Mandarin indignantly refused. "What need have I for powdered snake's teeth, or dried frog's legs? I am quite well—trouble me no more about physicians!"

So the days passed, Elder Brother noting with alarm his father's failing strength, but it remained for old Wang, Ku Mandarin's aged body servant, finally to disclose his master's obscure ailment.

"It is grief," he whispered to Elder Brother,

"grief and tears shed in darkness; his heart melting away in longing to see your worthless younger brother, Ku Er."

Ah-h, that was the secret sickness—his father's heart breaking for the worthless one! Ku Ee pondered over this bitterly, and while his head disapproved, his heart bade him speak to his father.

"I shall send runners forth this very day," he said, "and they shall search far and wide for our lost and erring Ku Er. It may be," he added consolingly and with strange lack of tact, "that by this time, Ku Er is a complete outcast; if so, my Honourable Father, you will certainly not wish to see such a wretched fellow!"

"M—, m—" old Ku Mandarin was about to protest; this, however, might have altered his eldest son's purpose; so, instead, he nodded his head, trying vainly to conceal the agitation within his breast.

And thus Elder Brother left him, Ku Mandarin's thoughts in that same old heart rending tumult of fear and hope—the heritage of fathers unnumbered since the first son was born into this world.

Seven days later, Ku Ee again stood before him, his countenance expressive of quite proper regret. Old Ku Mandarin, seated expectantly near the gateway saw him coming and leaned tensely forward.

"I am sorrowful," announced his eldest son, "sorrowful to report that Ku Er has been found living among the poor and despised of the earth. Cheng

Tu, one of our runners, learned that he turns a potter's wheel in the mornings and every afternoon may be found speaking to wretched street throngs. Cheng Tu reports also that Ku Er is evidently one of those low disreputable street actors, for he himself heard him telling and acting out some fabulous story to the crowd, and they poor fools, stood listening open-mouthed. Naturally Cheng Tu did not seek him out, as he felt certain that you would not wish such a dishonourable one under your revered roof!"

"And who is this miserable Cheng Tu—scum of the earth? Who is he that he dares to sit in judgment upon a son of my house?" Ku Mandarin's tones were charged with new strength and vast indignation. "You, Ku Ee, order three carts, one for me, one for you, and one for old Wang and our bedding! Also immediately summon Wang to make me ready, for this very day we start!"

"Start—start where, Honourable Father?"

Old Ku Mandarin suddenly laid a kindly hand upon Ku Ee's shoulder.

"I am sick," he said simply. "Day by day my strength fails me, but before I go hence, I too would stand upon the edge of the crowd as Cheng did —stand there, if only to look once again upon the face of my last-born son."

So, travelling hard by day and sleeping at poor, uncomfortable inns by night, upon the fourth day,

Ku Mandarin sat in his cart upon the edge of a motley throng, his poor old heart nigh to bursting as once more he beheld the dearly loved face of his errant Ku Er.

For Ku Er it was, although so changed in countenance as well as in dress, that his own father looked twice upon him to make sure of his identity. And Ku Er was speaking eloquently, now in simple narrative, now in fervent appeal, but always so earnestly and magnetically that he held his poor audience rapt. Ku Mandarin noted this and then his own heart began to thrill with the other hungry hearts crowded around him.

"What story is it," he wondered, "that Ku Er is telling—not Chinese, but true to life," for Ku Mandarin even yet, with all his wealth, would search long for one lost coin. Then as he listened, Ku Er began another story, and as he spoke, his father harked back long years in memory, when he too, a poor shepherd lad, had wandered deep into the night and far over the hills to come home at dawn with one wee lost lamb cuddled beneath his ragged garment. Ku Mandarin knew the entire truth of all these things, for it was only by his own efforts and because of his great ambition that he had obtained honour and riches.

It seemed that Ku Er knew many stories, for his voice changed suddenly, while with deep feeling and

some hesitancy, he began yet another. It was an old story—almost as old as life itself—the story of the Prodigal Son, and Ku Mandarin leaned far forward in the cart, his yearning eyes intent upon Ku Er's eloquent, speaking face.

The ancient Prodigal of Ku Er's narration seemed strangely like Ku Er himself, the same wilful boyhood, dissolute young manhood, the patient father finally outraged into giving him his inheritance, and so on to the Prodigal's sad end. The concluding part of the parable seemed difficult for Ku Er; indeed, when he told of the old father meeting the long-lost son with outstretched arms, ordering the best robes, the golden ring and the feast to be spread for him, Ku Er was forced to draw his sleeve across his eyes, a childish gesture which his father well remembered.

This seemed the end of the story, but the crowd stood hushed, expectant and Ku Er suddenly cried out: "Behold me—a Prodigal like unto this one! I too have been wayward and sinful, breaking my venerable father's heart, and but for the Jesu Word, I too, would have sunk to the swine!" Here Ku Er held a small black book aloft.

"In this book," he continued earnestly, "I learned of a Heavenly Father, who forgives and receives even after earthly fathers reject their children. He, the Jesu Father, has forgiven and accepted me, and

some day, it is my constant prayer, some day he may open the doors of my earthly father's heart to receive me again!"

At this point, overcome by deep feeling, Ku Er bowed his head for a long moment. When he lifted it, he beheld the crowd parting before him, and through this aisle fringed with rags and human misery he beheld his father coming toward him. Old Ku Mandarin walked slowly, leaning heavily upon his staff, but his eyes, alight with great joy, were fixed intently upon the face of Ku Er.

And Ku Er ran to meet his father, bowing low before him many times and murmuring words unheard by the crowd, but which ran like sparkling waters through the parched desert of old Ku Mandarin's long desolate heart.

Thereupon did Ku Er's father forget his wealth, official station, and, above all—the immutable Chinese custom. He placed his trembling arm around Ku Er's shoulders and lifting his voice uttered these thrilling words:—

"Behold my son also, who was lost and is found again, and it may be that he brings to his father's house a greater gift than any I could bestow upon him!"

With this, and leaning upon Ku Er's strong young arm, he turned away toward his cart.

As he did this, the little goose-herder standing by called out excitedly:

"But where is the Elder Brother? Is he off sulking like the one in the book?"

Now Elder Brother was doing exactly that thing. He was standing sullenly over by the carts with a great notion to run away and leave his father behind with Ku Er. But the piping voice of the little goose-herder flashed a swift picture of that other ancient jealous elder brother before his eyes. It was not a pleasant picture, and Ku Ee did not covet such a rôle for himself; really, at heart, he was very much of what a good elder brother should be, and in sudden contrition, he shouted out lustily, "His Elder Brother is here!" and so speaking, he hastened forward to meet Ku Er and his father.

IX

THE OLD BELL-RINGER OF PEKING

FOR five long summer days old Wang Cher, his back bending beneath its burden of bells, passed up and down the great streets and in and out the narrow byways of ancient Peking.

Of a truth, old Wang Cher who rang the church bell on worship days and peddled brass and copper bells in between, cried his wares early and late and far and wide, during those five June days. Bolder and more untiring than ever at this time seemed Wang Cher, for he ventured even into the court-yards of the rich and long after dusk could be heard calling his bells among the poor huts which clung barnacle-like to the mouldering base of the old city wall.

All these various markets he sought, but strangely enough in those five long summer days, he seldom passed the same way twice.

"Bells! Bells!" he shouted as he trudged along.

"Bells for the birth, bells for the bier; bells for the gate and bells for the cart; bells for the mule and bells for the pigeon—bells—bells!"

Over and over this long-drawn-out strident call

pierced through the rumble of the city streets, and unheeded for the most part, it fell upon the ears of the hurrying throng. However, here and there among the jostling crowd, a certain man or woman heard something more than an aged bell-ringer shouting his wares—they heard Wang Cher's hoarse, low whisper,—

"The Boxer army is marching northward with fire and sword, slaying all Jesu people and foreigners in its path! Let our Jesu people keep well within their walls. But should you hear me ring the church bell loud and fast—fly for your lives—bells, bells! Bells for the birth and bells for the bier! Bells, bells!" and on old Wang Cher passed, calling his bells and dropping his warning into hundreds of receptive ears.

Indeed, among all the Jesu folk who heard old Wang's fierce, low murmur, only two there were who derided him.

"Get along with thy evil words of a magpie!" growled fat, greasy Ku, who peddled greasier meat balls to camel drivers and donkey boys alike. "Get along with you! The Boxers can never reach our city gate, nor would our honourable officials let such rabble in!"

And worse scoffing than this came from Lien, the young boaster who led long caravans of tea-laden camels far up into Manchuria; Lien, who as old Wang Cher whispered to him, leaned back against

his squatting camel's bulging side and laughed derisively.

"Ha, ha, ha!—Hi-yi!" he shouted, clinking three silver taels in his loose breeches pocket; then he laughed louder than ever, for it rasped Lien to hear an aged man like Wang Cher threatening to do a brave deed which any youth might covet.

"Hi-yi!" he repeated scornfully. "Wait until we hear you ring the bell, Wang Cher! True, you manage a few tinkles upon our worship days and at such times as Christmas and the Eastertide, but hi-yi—the Boxers would be upon us before your withered legs could mount the belfry stairs. Should you need the bell rung suddenly, Most Honourable Grandfather, call upon an agile youth like me!" With these vain-glorious words, Lien sprang nimbly upon his camel's back and from this vantage ground laughed loudly down upon Wang Cher. But the old bell-ringer heard only half his scoffing, for ahead in the crowd he espied the elderly Ming Nai-nai, and into her withered ears he must drop his warning message.

Thus from one to another along the busy streets, or seeking them out in their homes, their shops and most familiar haunts, did old Wang Cher warn every Jesu follower he could find.

Five times the sun, lifting itself over the huge bulwark of city wall, and five times the wall seeming to lift itself and obliterate the sun, found the aged

bell-ringer at his self-appointed task. And although his legs were trembling and his old back nigh to breaking, yet even more days would Wang Cher have trudged to find certain missing ones among the Jesu flock.

Five long June evenings followed those busy days but the fifth seemed subtly different. The air was as softly hot and dusty, with a pale moon rising, but the streets were early deserted; shop fronts were boarded up before the usual closing time, and country carts well upon their homeward way, although certain city gates still stood open for their exit.

Old Wang Cher, worn with fatigue, noted the uncanny silence of the city streets and his heart leaped fearfully. Night and death-like silence falling together, a sinister brooding hush and then out of the shadows might flash flame and sword, slaughter and rapine, howls of victors and shrieks of the dying!

Not one of those four previous nights had found old Wang Cher upon his own humble k'ang. A trifle of sleep he had snatched—where—he could hardly say—for all those long nights he had watched and waited, often in dark alleys, sometimes stealing along the great streets, but never far away from the shadowy gateway, back of whose walls stood the church wherein hung his beloved bell.

Long years had old Wang Cher rung the Jesu people to service, and if it were pleasure to hear the

bell's sweet ringing on the Sabbaths as they came and went, what joy was his at Christmas and at Eastertide! Especially at the latter season, for old Wang Cher would sagely say:

"Truly it was a wonderful day when the little Jesu was born—but ah, what would it mean to us if a hundred Jesus had been born, and our one Jesu had not died and risen again to point us the way to heaven?"

And strangely enough, as he watched and waited on this soft June night, did the old bell-ringer's thoughts stray far ahead to the Easter time. The Easter bells—why, he could close his weary eyes and in fancy hear their pealing. From far and near, in mission and cathedral belfries they were sending their joyous echoes reverberating into every nook and cranny of old Peking. And above them all, as he crouched there in the shadows of the mission gateway, old Wang Cher was sure that he heard his own bell pealing—pealing, but more faintly with every stroke—pealing—Why, poor old Wang was falling asleep! "Ah, let those tired old bones rest for a little, that weary brain relax its vigil—but no!" Suddenly Wang Cher sprang up in terror—a moment he stood in great confusion. "Could that be his bell pealing?" No, it was a frightful sound—the shrieks of a frenzied mob, rising and falling upon the warm June night like distant surf thundering upon the shore.

Wang Cher ran down the narrow side street to where it opened upon the great city thoroughfare. He strained his ears to listen: the sound seemed far away, but knowing his own dimness of hearing old Wang Cher turned, fled back and unlocked the mission gate. Then he barred it and also the church door behind him.

Within the little church all was dark and still. To one side of the inner entrance, a door opened upon the belfry stairs and pendant bell rope. Into this small inclosure old Wang dashed, locked the door and looping up the bell rope as he went, climbed upward into the shadowy belfry.

That June night now so long gone by was a terrible one in old Peking. Then it was when the Jesu folk, sitting quietly with their little ones in their own moonlighted courtyards, and the old folk lying early upon their k'angs, heard the first sharp clangour of their church bell. How they sprang up in terror—"'Tis old Wang Cher!" they shouted fearfully—"Old Wang! He is ringing us to flight, for the Boxers are coming!" And flee they did, while the bell clanged on—"Clang, clang," it shouted. "Run for your lives—find caves in the hills—dig holes in the ground—get to the open country!—Clang, clang, clang!"

And many there were who like the wise virgins, were all ready to flee. These fled with the bell's first warning note, dozens of them finding safety, while

others less provident, were swept to their doom.

Justly or unjustly, fat Ku was given wisdom enough to fly with the first of them, and there he was with only the clothes on his back, sweating in terror and crawling into an old dry sewer which ran beneath the south city wall. And Lien, the scoffer, his caravan of camels left behind, fled with his aged grandmother on his back but even with this burden bending him earthward he, too, found safety.

Meanwhile the mob swept on, burning, slaying, pillaging. In its first onslaught, the sound of the church bell was lost in the general uproar. Gradually however, as Christian homes marked for destruction were found deserted, the sharp insistent clanging of the bell all too soon revealed its purpose, and the mob surged toward the church.

Old Wang Cher, high up in the belfry, his back strained to bursting, mingled sweat and grime running down his weather-beaten face and dropping upon his bleeding hands, heard it coming and rang harder than ever.

Clang, clang!—Peal upon peal floated out over the riot and carnage of the night. Below him pandemonium reigned. The mission gate was jammed open—the church door broken down and a moment later, the smell of smoke and flame swept up the belfry stairs. Old Wang coughed chokingly and his bell lost a stroke, but he made up for it with

the next. Then more smoke, more choking—old Wang's eyes streamed water and blood. Flames were crackling now—he could hear them for their very nearness, but the bell's clangour mercifully drowned the bloodthirsty shrieks from below.

And Jesu's God was good to old Wang Cher the bell-ringer, for suddenly he was lifted above all bodily pain. Even the vision of fleeing and slaughtered Jesu folk faded from before his tortured eyes while for one brief, translated moment, he seemed to be ringing the Easter bell. Joyously, triumphantly it pealed for him, and old Wang shouted—nay, rather he gasped—

"Christ, the Lord, is risen to-day! Christ—the Lord—is—risen"— With these victorious words upon his lips and his bleeding hands still grasping the rope, old Wang Cher and the bell crashed downward together.

* * * *

It was Easter morning in Peking. Many years had passed since old Wang Cher rang the Jesu folk to safety on that awful night in June. Yet the old bell-ringer was not forgotten. Lien the camel driver, who had borne his aged grandmother to safety, remembered him well.

And on this bright Easter morning, as Lien stood in his gateway waiting for his wife and children to join him, he was thinking of the old bell-ringer. So engrossed in thought was he that he did not no-

tice Ku, the food peddler, approaching. Ku's years were telling upon him, but—for once—he looked almost clean. Suddenly as he greeted Lien, the Easter church bells began to ring from far and near, their sweet resonant tones rising and falling, until the whole earth seemed full of melody.

With the first peal of the bells, Ku and Lien bowed their heads reverently. A moment later Ku spoke:

"I never hear the Easter bells but I think of how old Wang Cher loved to ring them."

"And I," Lien said hesitatingly, "and I never hear them, but through all their music I seem to see old Wang Cher up there alone in that terrible belfry, smoke and flame devouring him, whilst we unworthy ones fled to safety."

Then another voice interrupted. It was the aged Ming Nai-nai, bent near double with her years, her face a mask of wrinkles, leaning heavily upon her cane, but her voice still astonishingly strong. As for her faded old eyes, they pierced into the very hearts of Ku and Lien.

"Aye," she spoke firmly, "our old Wang Cher was lifted up for a purpose on that day. Through his sacrifice, Jesu our Lord was raised again, not only for those who knew him not, but to live anew in Christian hearts grown hard and cold."

With this, old Ming Nai-nai passed slowly on her way, leaving Ku and Lien with shame-bowed

heads gazing upon the ground. And they were standing thus when Lien's young wife joined them; for a moment she considered them curiously, then in silence they all turned and walked toward the church, while over and around them the Easter bells pealed forth triumphantly, as even old Wang Cher could ever have wished to hear them—

"Christ, the Lord, is risen to-day!"

X

SHINING DAY'S CHANGE OF HEART

SHINING DAY, usually of pleasant countenance, stood before me glowering black as a thundercloud; and to Shining Day there seemed good reason for frowns. He had just been denied his ambition to step from the position of "boy" into that of "cook," our faithful Cheng Ssu having been summoned home to a distant province.

"But, Shining Day," I expostulated, "you are not at all an experienced cook—in fact with all your accomplishments, you know very little about cooking."

"Ah, the Tai-tai does not know all! I have been studying the wonderful foreign cook book for three months. Also, if my mistress will follow Cheng Ssu with written words of inquiring, he will set down for her in black and white that he has conferred upon me the sum total of his knowledge to cook."

"Is it possible?" I murmured, trying hard to conceal my disbelief in Shining Day's assertion. The truth was in Shining Day, but although he was a Jesu follower, it did not always serve the emergency. Then I spoke firmly, "No, Shining Day, I cannot

grant your request. You must remain our boy and while we are away from home the remainder of this week, you will please use your best endeavour to find us an experienced cook."

Alas, there was not the faintest glimmer of brightness upon Shining Day's handsome face as he saluted and left the room.

But the next morning, when we departed for our visit to the port city, Shining Day was all smiles. He accompanied us to the station, his entire demeanour marked with courteous helpfulness and solicitude for our welfare. Inwardly I rejoiced over my firmness of the day previous—Shining Day was certainly a competent and efficient boy. What a pity it would be to turn such a good boy into a poor cook!

Fancy my surprise then, upon our return a few days later, to find not Shining Day awaiting the Tai-fu and me as we descended from the lumbering Russian train, but our erstwhile coolie, Chang Er. Chang Er was clumsy and awkward to the nth degree, and he stood grinning sheepishly and saluting wildly to the four winds of heaven.

"Where is Shining Day?" inquired the Tai-fu, while I was getting my breath.

"Shining Day—Shining Day?" Chang Er lifted a confused face and blinked rapidly toward the sun, as if hoping that bright orb might come to his assistance. Then he stuttered: "Why—why—

Shining Day could not come to-day—he has taken a position as cook."

"As cook! Whom is he serving?" I gasped.

"You, Tai-tai, you and the honourable Tai-fu—Shining Day is now established as cook in your revered household. Moreover"—Chang Er spoke rapidly, evidently to get the worst out and be done with it—"Moreover, Shining Day, as is the custom of cooks, has engaged the other servants. He has promoted me to be boy, and has made the gatekeeper's young son to be your coolie."

Speechless I gazed upon Chang Er who continued to grin sheepishly as he shuffled uneasily from one foot to the other. However, the situation was saved by the Tai-fu, who suddenly laughed—immoderately, I thought—as he boosted me into the clumsy Chinese cart.

"Let it go!" he said. "We'll give Shining Day a fair trial."

And we did, in spite of the crash with which my own "face" had fallen in the affair. However, the trial was mostly ours, for worse food we never ate than during Shining Day's régime as cook. Moreover, he was so engaged in experimenting upon new dishes that he had no time for instructing his appointees in their duties as boy and coolie.

Both of these incumbents were hopeless in their new positions. Chang Er managed to trip over his own feet at every turn and it was a rare meal when

our table talk was not punctuated with crashing cup or plate. In fact, the old dish mender with his little foot wheel and bag of tiny brass and silver clamps, became a permanent institution in our rear courtyard.

As for the new coolie who washed, ironed, and wiped floors, our white raiment soon took on a depressing dun colour, and our varnished floors were swished and swashed until they bore a painful resemblance to city sidewalks after the subsidence of a muddy flood.

At last, when we could endure the strain no longer, we gave Shining Day the alternative of resuming his position as boy or seeking another situation.

"I will go elsewhere!" shouted the enraged Shining Day. "To think that I, a cook, would descend to a position as 'boy' again! Never! Moreover, I call upon the gods whom I deserted, to hear me vow that I am done with Jesu things and Jesu people!"

And so it seemed. Returning to the kitchen, Shining Day boxed the coolie's ears, kicked poor clumsy Chang Er out and down the steps, made some mysterious disposition of all the kitchen cutlery, and departed fairly breathing out hatred for all people and things of Jesu.

But here is the strangeness of this Jesu, after even such a precarious foothold as he had held in Shining Day's wilful heart. And this is Shining Day's story as we pieced it together.

Leaving us, Shining Day hurried southward to Shan-tung. The times were rife with the preparatory anti-foreign uprising, and on the way south, Shining Day filled with the spirit of revenge, fell in with and joined a band of Boxers. These savagely fanatical men were training in a miserable little mud village about fifty miles, or one hundred and fifty li, distant from an inland mission station. This station was slated to be the first and special object of their attack.

During his first day with the Boxers, no one could outvoice Shining Day in his vituperation of all things Christian. The second day his voice was not so loud, the third day he fell silent, while the others raged and threatened, the fourth day he sat apart, immediately outside the mud wall of the village. The leader of the Boxers, spying him, strode up ferociously.

"Why," he demanded fiercely, "do you not revile the Jesu devils any longer? Maybe," he leered wickedly, "maybe you have been a Jesu follower yourself? If so"—here the Boxer brandished his broadsword threateningly.

Then suddenly, almost to his own surprise, Shining Day jumped up and shook his huge fist in the Boxer chief's face, shouting as he did so, "Yes, I was a Jesu follower, a poor, miserable one, but not yet am I so vile that I can slaughter those who brought me the ever-living words of Jesu!"

With this he gave the Boxer chief's chin a good, old-fashioned undercut. The Boxer, sword and all, went down in a heap, and before he recovered sufficiently to wonder what had struck him, Shining Day was speeding away upon winged feet toward the menaced mission compound.

But alas for Shining Day's late repentance! When he paused at the end of thirty li, he found to his dismay that he had made a wrong turn and must retrace his steps more than a third of the distance he had come. There was the greatest danger in doing this, as Shining Day well knew, for by that time the Boxers were bound to be hot upon his trail. However, back he must go if he meant to warn the missionaries, and even while his flesh shrank, there was no weakening of purpose in his newly awakened heart.

And so Shining Day settled down into a fast, steady trot back over the rough way he had come. And as he went, but one thought filled his mind. It was the supreme importance of his errand, the feeling that even death would be easier than not to do his duty. Shining Day smiled a little over this word "duty" that kept jogging up in his mind. "Duty!" Why, it loomed before him more alluringly than any pleasure he had ever followed. "Why?" he wondered, and then he knew—it was because in doing it he felt that in some measure he could atone for his recent denial of Jesu. "What a liar, what a hypo-

crite, what a thief he had been," for Shining Day thought often and uncomfortably of his last performance while in the mission Tai-fu's household. He had failed the Tai-fu, after all the Tai-fu's goodness to him when once, for a period of weeks, he had lain sick in the hospital of Great Peace. And the Tai-fu's wife! With what patience and kind excusings she had trained him in the duties of house boy, in order that she might have freedom for the vastly more important work among the women and children in the hospital. Ah, worse than an ingrate he had been, for when he had fled, angry and revengeful, had he not offered to aid the wicked Boxers in their awful work of burning a mission hospital and slaughtering other missionaries like the good Tai-fu and his wife?

This last thought was so overwhelming in its weight of shame that Shining Day's head hung low while he ran.

And as he ran with head down, he stumbled and fell. For a moment he was so tired that he lay quite motionless. As he lay thus, a strange sound thrilled along the ground beneath his ear—it was the sound, faint but unmistakable, of marching feet. Hearing this, Shining Day was up and away, and leaving the main road he fled toward the river, which ran at right angles to the travelled country road.

And not an instant too soon did Shining Day reach the turbid stream and slip down over the high

washed-out bank. Just as he did this, the mob of angry Boxers thronged around a bend in the road—the fugitive could guess their numbers by the clamour. Suddenly the leader yelled in a loud voice: "Search the river bank! Search the river bank!"

Hearing this frightful cry, Shining Day glimpsed a little hollow under an overhanging mass of black dirt and weeds, and burrowed into it like a hunted fox. But he was a big, brawny fellow, and shrink and shrivel as he would, he felt that portions of his body must be as plain to be seen as a black camel on a white road. And undoubtedly he would have been discovered, had not the Boxers feared the caving, washed-under edge of the river's bank. As it was, they ventured only so far as it seemed safe, and after glancing hastily up and down the river's course, they swept off again in the direction of Ta Chau, the city in which the mission compound was located.

With the sound of their retreating footsteps, a feeling of desperation seized Shining Day. There might be a shorter road across country to the mission station, but he did not know it. Moreover, he hesitated to venture up to the main road again for fear of some Boxers having been left behind to cope with just such a situation.

So for a long half-hour Shining Day sat huddled in the shallow hole beneath the overhanging clump of earth, out of which dangling weed roots formed

a fringy curtain before his hunted eyes. At the end of the half-hour, a simple expedient occurred suddenly to Shining Day; so very simple and yet so powerful was the impetus of it that the boy crawled out of the little hole and climbed boldly down to the river's edge. Arriving there, he knelt humbly on the cracked, muddy ground and prayed to Jesu not only for forgiveness, but for help in his hour of need.

It was a brief, halting supplication, but heartfelt and earnest. And as Shining Day arose from his knees, lo—the answer to his prayer swept around a curve in the river!

However, so ignorant was the Chinese boy of his new surroundings that at first he saw only an old Chinese boat with a little hut-like arrangement built up in the middle, under which probably the old man poling the boat slept at night.

The boat came on rapidly with the current, the old man seeming to pole with difficulty. Suddenly he nosed the boat into a sand bank and at the same instant he spied Shining Day.

"Help me!" he cried. "Swim out here! Help me off this bank and you may ride with me to Ta Chau!"

"Ta Chau!" shrieked Shining Day from the bank —"Is not Ta Chau over one hundred li from here?"

"It is by the earthen road, but not by the river. Ta Chau is only sixty li down the river, and if you'll

help a sick man, we shall be there by midday to-morrow!"

Then it was that Shining Day beheld his prayer answered before his very eyes, and thinking upon the wonder of it, he stripped himself, tied his garments upon his head, and swam like a fish out to the sand bank. Reaching it, he hastily replaced his few garments, stepped into the boat and with a few vigorous pushes with the pole, sent the small craft out again into midstream.

With Shining Day at the helm managing the boat with skill and strength, the old boatman seemed to collapse; he crept feebly into the hut moaning as he did so,

"Hasten, I implore you! Hasten the boat—if I do not reach the foreign Tai-fu soon I shall die!"

Shining Day glanced keenly down at the old man where he lay. It was evident that he came from far up the river, and bent upon his desire for aid, had heard little or nothing of the Boxer hostilities against the foreigners.

Guiding a boat along a swift turbid stream, set every here and there with a treacherous sand bank, was to Shining Day like a return to his childhood. The first fourteen years of his life he had lived in a houseboat, and if there was any feat of swimming or any small craft that he had not mastered, why no other lad on the wide Pei Ho knew what or where it was.

As it was, he guided the old man's boat with the hand and eye of a master. Now to the right, now swiftly to the left, but ever onward with the river flowing to the sea. Wonderful speed they made that day, but when night fell, with only a pale moon shining, he had to pole along cautiously. However, he did not stop. Dawn found him still at his post, weary and spent, haggard of face, and eyes reddened with straining through the night shadows. Behind him lay the old man, muttering and grinding his teeth, in his occasional lucid intervals begging Shining Day to hasten.

And Shining Day, with no thought of resting, did hasten, until, even before midday, the tiled roofs of Ta Chau rose before his seeking eyes.

With this sight before him, Shining Day's strength seemed renewed. He poled along rapidly and a few minutes later tied the boat to a primitive pier, hired a policeman to guard it, and loading the sick man upon his back set off hastily for the mission compound.

It was a pitiful sight, but the Chinese whom Shining Day met and questioned as to the way, were hardened to all aspects of suffering and distress. Shining Day's face was ghastly white, his lips trembled; his feet were bleeding—all this visible distress, and yet not even one who directed him made an inquiry or offered a kindly suggestion!

However, Shining Day, knowing his heathen

countrymen, did not expect any favours or sympathy, and so stumbled along until he reached the mission compound.

Once there, kindly hands relieved him of his burden and ministered to Shining Day himself, even while his lips faltered out the warning he had travelled so far to bring.

But the warning proved sufficient. A few moments later a message was winging its way to the nearest port city where the allied gunboats lay, and in swift return a message flew back to the enlightened governor of that particular province. The result of all this was that the following night, when the Boxer band arrived and swept down upon the mission compound, they fell back astounded before the sight of a troop of Imperial Chinese soldiers guarding the mission compound.

After that, what was left for the surprised Boxers but to retreat, cursing their leaders and dispersing as they went?

In the days of comparative safety that followed for the mission, there seemed danger of Shining Day becoming a hero; but whatever he was to others, he was no hero to himself. Then and there he set himself to live as a Jesu follower should, and at the very beginning, this necessitated his doing the hardest thing he had ever done, for to him it involved the loss of "face."

Nevertheless, Shining Day summoned all his reso-

lution and did this "hardest thing." He sat down and painstakingly wrote us, his former employers, a letter. In this were some precious words not for repeating, but at the very end he begged for forgiveness for making away with the kitchen cutlery. "This cutlery," he said, "could be found in the bottom of the big rain barrel out under the kitchen eaves." And there we found it, somewhat rusted to be sure, but bright with the final and emphatic confirmation of Shining Day's change of heart.

XI

EASTER'S WONDER-FLOWER

LITTLE MA-LEE, waiting at the dispensary for her mother's box of black salve, heard Nurse-lady say it. Of a truth, was not Nurse-lady's fine cheerful face turned toward dirty, unkempt little Ma-Lee at that very moment—and didn't Ma-Lee hear her words clear and plain as a cuckoo's note?

"Yes, we wish every young girl, who will, to come to our seven weeks' Easter class; and if she comes regularly and puts her heart into her work and study, she will learn many things—such as reading the words of Jesu; also, how to keep herself neat and clean, how to bathe baby brother and sister, how to sew, how to—"

Ma-Lee sniffed disdainfully, "Who wanted to read the words of the foreign Jesu—or to be clean—or to wash a fat baby brother, such as she had? Certainly no wise Chinese would desire white, faded out babies, like those belonging to the foreign devils; all of them quite evidently the victims of too much soap and water!"

But Nurse-lady, oblivious of Ma-Lee's contempt,

continued her announcement, smiling across at Ming Nai-nai, her hospital assistant, and at the same time watching Ma-Lee out of the tail of her eye.

"And this is not all: To every girl who enrolls for the seven weeks we will give to her the beautiful blue cotton cloth for a fine outer garment, and Miss Teacher, who has all knowledge of sewing, will cut it out and assist in the making of it. By the good Easter time these garments will be all finished and beautiful to wear to the Easter day services, and—"

Ma-Lee leaned suddenly forward; her black eyes shining covetously through her tangled mat of hair. "A new garment!" then she glanced down at her own clothes—how ragged she was! Stealthily she slipped from her chair and tiptoed over nearer to Nurse-lady, for the latter was promising something, even more alluring to Ma-Lee than a new garment.

"You should see them!" she said enthusiastically to Ming Nai-nai—"There is a great basket filled and running over with them—little round fat bulbs, which by Easter time will be blooming and shining like white stars, and," this impressively, "to every girl who begins with the class to-morrow and enrolls for the seven weeks, we will give seven bulbs in a beautiful blue bowl. On the bottom of each bowl, each girl will place her own mark and all the bowls with the bulbs in them will be kept in the warm study room, where their owners may tend them and watch them grow. Then on Easter Sun-

day," Nurse-lady continued, "every girl will be expected to wear her new garment and to lend her lovely wonder-flowers to the Jesu altar; for in seven weeks, even the most ignorant will have learned much about Jesu, and how without Him there would never have been any Easter. After the services, of course, the girls may take their flowers and garments home." With this, Nurse-lady turned hopefully in Ma-Lee's direction, only to see that ragged creature flying out the door; Nurse-lady laughed ruefully.

"Gone, hasn't she? To catch that Ma-Lee is like trying to put salt on a bird's tail and it was sugar I offered this time. Do you think, Ming Nai-nai, that there is any chance of our seeing her to-morrow?"

Ming Nai-nai shook her black head doubtfully.

"Well if so," she said, " 'tis a chance as a good grain sprouting when the wind sows it. That girl's heart is of a greediness just now. She longs for that new garment and the flowers—but only consider those parents of hers! Long years have I known of them, her brow-beaten mother and big pompous father, and never will he come to our Hospital of Great Peace even for a pill, lest he should hear the name 'Jesu.' Ma-Lee and her mother steal away here it is true, but only for the medicine, never do they come for the Word. No—'tis a weed she is, that little Ma-Lee—born a weed, live a weed, die a weed—naught else. I have watched her and often

I've tended her, and always the same things do I see—dirt and rags and lice, and does she ever ask to be rid of them? No, I say, No—"

"Sh—Ming Nai-nai," Nurse-lady stemmed the torrent of words, but even while she did so she smiled mysteriously.

"I think that I have discovered a wee crack in that hard little heart of Ma-Lee's and if I have—" but right here, a wailing infant was thrust under Nurse-lady's eyes and this sentence was never finished.

Meanwhile Ma-Lee sped homeward. With the liberty of the poor, she ran unaccompanied down the narrow streets and alleys, throwing back her dishevelled locks as she scurried along. Soon she turned through a crumbling gateway, dashed across a littered up courtyard and burst noisily into a mean little room, where her mother sat cross-legged on the k'ang nursing a fat baby boy.

Breathlessly, Ma-Lee made announcement of the mission Easter class and its prizes. As to what might be learned while attending it she neglected to mention. "Anyway—what use? Who save a most foolish one, would care for those things of learning such as how to wash a baby or to read the words of that man Jesu—Pah!"

Unfortunately, while Ma-Lee disclosed the matter to her mother, her back was towards the door, and she did not see her father enter. He stood quietly,

overhearing every word. "Very good, very good and fine for you to get a new garment," he stormed, "but I know what they're up to—those tricky foreign devils! Never will I consent for you to go daily where they teach that Jesu Doctrine!"

Ma-Lee smiled craftily, although she had been taken completely by surprise.

"My honourable father, do you not know that should they speak the hateful word 'Jesu' that I'll stop my ears and hear it not? Do I not despise their doctrine as much as you do? But," tearfully, "most honourable father, please to cast your eyes upon my ragged garments and consider that I can secure a most beautiful new one by going to the Mission but for two hours every day for only seven weeks!"

Ma-Lee's voice had been ascending in a most alarming crescendo and pausing only for a good breath, she suddenly began screaming:

"I'm going—I say that I will go and I'll have the new garment and the flowers also, for the flowers are the wonder-flowers—they burst forth out of ugly brown bulbs and I never had one in my whole life—and I'm going, I'm going—!"

With this Ma-Lee, who from fourteen years' practise knew a fairly certain method of obtaining her own way, fell into a convulsive rage. She howled and she shrieked, tearing at her hair and beating her head, until her honourable father, like most bul-

lies, went down before the superior onslaught.

"Let her go, let her go!" he shouted impotently to his cowering wife. "Let her go, how can the best of fathers live with such a wild cat? 'Tis you, worthless mother of my offspring, who have indulged this wretched girl, but let her go and bring home the new garment and never again ask me for such a stupendous favour!"

For one so recently hysterical Ma-Lee hastily subsided into a surprising calm. Her young tear-streaked face assumed a most ingratiating expression as she crossed over to where her father stood and bowed low before him.

"Gracious thanks to you, most honourable father! With your revered permission I shall attend this class, but I promise you to stop my ears whenever they speak the hateful word 'Jesu.' More than this, I shall never grace their Easter day services by wearing my new garment and carrying my wonder-flowers up to their Jesu altar. No indeed, 'tis the clever one I'll be and steal away home with my flowers and new garment just as soon as the last study class is finished."

"Hi yi!" Ma-Lee's father ejaculated with some interest. "'Tis well that her head is not all wooden; well, go you this time and then never again!"

"And is it not better that she should?" Mrs. Ma lifted her meek head suddenly. "Can she come to so much harm even hearing the Jesu words as run-

ning wild up and down the streets? And such frightful behaviour as she accords her honourable father! It may be that she will learn some proper behaviour from these Jesu folk and—"

"Silence, utter not that name again!" roared Ma Fu-chin and he strode angrily away from the house.

* * * *

The next afternoon, the big clock in the girls' study room was striking two, when Miss Teacher called the Easter class to order. Nurse-lady also was present and nearby stood her faithful Ming Nai-nai. Seated in front of them, bright-eyed but solemn of face, were two rows of young girls, fifteen in all, ranging from thirteen to sixteen years of age.

Nurse-lady inspected these rows closely and her bright face clouded, then she glanced out through the window and at once the clouds lifted and she smiled happily. There was another young girl approaching, a ragged, unkempt little creature, but yes—it was Ma-Lee!

Nurse-lady quickly left the rostrum and hastened to the door. For the moment Ma-Lee was overcome with a strange shyness, then suddenly she lifted her head defiantly and brushing rudely past Nurse-lady marched boldly over the threshold and to the front of the room, where she sat down on the end chair in the back row of girls.

If little Ma-Lee suffered pangs of strangeness her impassive young countenance did not betray it. But

she was an "outsider" in every possible respect, not the least difference being that the other girls were all mission schoolgirls and well trained in the niceties of personal neatness and cleanliness.

They had also been trained in the ways of kindliness, but alas, for the overfastidious! When Ma-Lee sat down upon the end seat the girl beside her involuntarily shrank away and drew back the folds of her clean cotton garment.

Ma-Lee noted this offensive action and her heart burned with rage. However, she decided to treat her unmannerly neighbour with the contempt she deserved; so ignoring her altogether, she resolutely began an inspection of the girls in front of her. This inspection she conducted quite carefully and silently and soon began to marvel.

"Clean! How could any girl ever reach such a stage of cleanliness as all of these girls in front of her exhibited?" Their plain blue garments were immaculate—not all new, but every one of them neat and clean, not a single ragged tear to be seen anywhere!

And this was not the end. The most astonishing cleanliness of all was in the state of their faces and hands. Ma-Lee had never beheld such clean Chinese skin anywhere in her limited world. And then, their hair! Soft, sleek, shining and—yes—it was clean also. Ma-Lee threw back her own unkempt locks and doing so, her glance fell upon her

hands, not soiled but dirty—and her feet in their torn, soiled shoes, her garment ragged and grimy.

The girl immediately in front of Ma-Lee was very pretty; whenever she turned her head Ma-Lee could glimpse the soft rose colour in her smooth olive cheek. Ma-Lee wondered if ever this girl had been ragged and dirty? Then another more amazing query came to her. "Would she—Ma-Lee, bear the slightest resemblance to this beautiful one if she should undertake the detestable task of making herself clean?"

That first study-class period was a hard one for little Ma-Lee; there was not a single moment of it, when her whole being was not charged with rage and humiliation. But she gave no sign of this inner disturbance, for she was determined to have the bowl of bulbs and the new blue garment. Much could be endured for such treasures! Yes, she would even endure the society of the obnoxious girls, not one of whom remained near her for more than a moment after Nurse-lady had made them all acquainted.

Did I say that Ma-Lee did not have a single happy moment that first afternoon? Well, she did—this was the moment when Miss Teacher gave her the seven little brown bulbs. How they nestled down together in the beautiful blue bowl, for all the world like seven wee brown ducklings in a shallow pond!

Ma-Lee held her bowl close and marvelled greatly. "In seven weeks, her little brown bulbs would change

themselves into wonder-flowers. They would then be in full bloom and, here her unworthy thoughts held her, she would run away home not only with them but with her new garment. As for the study class, she hated every girl in it,yes—and almost hated Nurse-lady and Miss Teacher also. How glorious it would be to steal away with bowl, bulbs and garment on that last afternoon before Easter!—trick them all—that's what she would do. Meanwhile, however, she would show those hateful girl creatures that they were not the only ones who could exhibit clean hands and faces and shining plaits of hair, with beautiful tassels dangling from the ends."

Ma-Lee's mother had passed through divers experiences in her life and felt herself prepared for almost anything. But when Ma-Lee swept tempestuously into the room that first afternoon of the Easter class study, and called lustily for soap and hot water, poor Mrs. Ma sat like one stricken—"had Ma-Lee gone crazy?"

However, reviving in a few moments, she assented to her daughter's vociferous demands and hastened to set a huge water pot to heating over the mud range. This unusual proceeding was followed by a diligent search for the long but neglected soap ball; at length it was found and, the water being hot, operations began at once.

Ma-Lee was a maiden, young and well favoured, but there was nothing of classic or poetic beauty in

the cleansing process she passed through that late afternoon. Suffice to say that she emerged shining clean from top to toe, and feeling light and buoyant as a bird; and a busy bird at that, drying and pressing her clean garments, hunting bits of cloth and threading needles, while her mother, awaking to some long forgotten ambitions, patched and mended with zeal and neatness.

In the midst of these unusual activities, Ma-Lee's honourable father arrived and was amazed to behold the transformation in his young daughter. It not only elicited his admiration, but he fell into such an indignation when it was related to him how the clean but despicable schoolgirls had treated Ma-Lee, that then and there he strode out to the shoe-peddler's and fetched home a new pair of neat black shoes for Ma-Lee's small, shapely feet.

Not surprising then, when little Ma-Lee ventured back to the study class the following afternoon that friendly smiles greeted her instead of aversion. And of a truth, Nurse-lady who came in looking for shabby, untidy Ma-Lee, might have passed right by her had not Ma-Lee—Oh, the wonder of it, dropped her a polite little curtsey!

Seven weeks can drag out interminably when one is watching for wee brown bulbs to sprout and slender green spears to grow tall and finally crown themselves with star-like wonder-flowers.

And yet seven weeks can go swift as a happy

dream when young girls are together laughing, sewing, talking, studying, learning—yes, even when studying and learning of the things and ways of Jesu!

Strange about Ma-Lee; long before the seven weeks were over—or even well begun—she forgot to stop her ears with the sound of the word "Jesu," and at the end of the third week she was one of the few to linger daily after class and ask endless questions about everything which a young mind would seek to know of the words and things of Jesu.

At her home, even in spite of her precaution, sometimes she let slip bits of her new Jesu knowledge. Her father noted this and worked up a fine frenzy, which he managed to restrain until the Friday evening before the last study class. He was waiting for Ma-Lee when she came home and as she crossed the threshold he seized her roughly by the shoulder.

"Ungrateful child!" he shouted, "what have I not endured that you should have your own way, but this is the end! 'Tis well that to-morrow will see the close of your wretched study class, but do not dare to come home without that new garment under your arm, the flowers also, if you desire them, and this will be the end of this Jesu nonsense or—" and he glanced threateningly toward his stout leather mule whip hanging on the wall.

"Surely, I'll bring them home," but the pretty rose-colour faded from Ma-Lee's face as she spoke.

Saturday dawned and with the afternoon came the last study class. All through this session Ma-Lee sat lost in an unhappy maze of thought. She, who had never cared for any one's opinion, now beheld herself despised and an outcast from that happy circle of young girls; and as for Miss Teacher and Nurse-lady, "assuredly they would never allow her to come inside of the mission gates again." To add to her regret, only the day previous Miss Teacher had offered her a seat in the girls' day school and already Ma-Lee was consumed with a perfect passion for learning.

Slow tears filled Ma-Lee's eyes, as filled with bitter regret, she considered her promised perfidy. Here she sat clean and neat as the best one there—yes and able to learn better than most of them; and with the words and teaching of Jesu in her unworthy heart; and in spite of all these things, she was about to slip away stealthily with her flowers and her new blue garment. "'Steal,' them, that's what it was. It could be called by no other name, for on Easter morning when the other girls would rise in their shining new garments and carry their flowers up to the altar as they were expected to do—she, Ma-Lee, would not be there."

Neither was she! Easter morning dawned bright and beautiful; the bell high up in the mission church belfry, rang out the glad Easter tidings for every one to hear. Service time came and with it the

study class girls and their wonder-flowers, but no little Ma-Lee!

Over and over again with puckered brows, Nurse-lady and Miss Teacher counted their girls, but fifteen they were and fifteen they stubbornly remained. A happy row of glad-faced girls now and then casting curious glances toward Ma-Lee's empty seat, but for the most part intent upon the bowls of star-like flowers, held carefully upon their knees.

What a beautiful service that was! There was music, singing and Wang Pastor gave a wonderful talk about Jesu, the first Easter day and all that Easter should mean in the minds and hearts of men.

Following this, he spoke of the Easter study class, the long weeks in which the girls had worked and studied, and tended their bulbs for Easter blooming. "During this period," he said, "several of the girls had given their hearts to Jesu"; and he went on to compare the Jesu spirit rising in their hearts and casting aside the husks of sin to the snow-white wonder-flowers emerging from the unlovely brown bulbs.

Then he sat down and the organ sounded again; music—softly, sweetly, melodious, a march-hymnal. With the first chord as a signal, the fifteen girls of the study class arose and marched slowly up the long aisle at the side and around in front of the altar.

As they passed the altar, each girl set her flowers down and bowing her head reverently passed on. Ten, eleven, twelve girls had marched by the altar and twelve blue bowls glistened beneath their plumes of shining wonder-flowers. Then girl number thirteen added her bowl, and girls fourteen and fifteen were stooping to complete the semi-circle at the altar's base—when there was a sudden flurry at the big entrance door—

This door swung open impetuously, there was a gust of cold fresh air, the swish of a new blue garment, a glimpse of a young girl's face going red and pale by turns, a flash of blue bowl and white flowers, and before any one could count, "Ee-er-san" * there was little Ma-Lee flushed and breathless standing bravely up before them all and quite forgetting to set her bowl down.

Then instead of bowing her head, she lifted it proudly and turning, faced the hushed congregation and her voice, thrilling through the quiet sanctuary warmed every heart there. Aye, that vibrant young voice thrilled even the cold, hard heart of her father, who had followed after little Ma-Lee in anger, and who now stood in the open doorway watching her; but as he beheld her and heard her words, anger left him and his head dropped to his breast—for what

* "Ee-er-san"—one-two-three.

Ma-Lee said was this, and her face was shining even more than her beautiful flowers:

"I believe," she said, and her voice rose triumphantly, "I believe in the Lord Jesu, who died and rose again that I might have eternal life!"

XII

CHENG SSU RECEIVES A WIFE

TO those who daily stepped in and out over his worn threshold, Cheng Ssu's mind was apparently fixed, without hint of deviation, upon the duties of his own special domain.

This was the Chinese kitchen, some twenty feet removed from our household quarters. Here within his lattice-windowed, smoke-mellowed walls, Cheng Ssu made common pie crust to blossom like a New England flower bed; he boned skinny, native fowls until eventually upon the platter, they appeared as diminutive but decently plump birds; then too, he carved roses and daisies out of carrots and turnips for garnishing the roasts of bear, venison, or—mule. All these, and even more wonderful mysteries of Chinese food he concocted, and there was no vagrant sign or hint that over this daily procession of homely tasks, over and above savoury kitchen odours, Romance was fluttering her shining wings.

But he who runs in and out the door, or he who sometimes sits longer as a guest by the fire, cannot always read the mind of a young man, especially a young Chinese man.

Cheng Ssu's kitchen guests and fellow servants saw nothing unusual in the young cook, while master and mistress had never even considered the world-wide application of "Spring and love and a young man's fancy."

Therefore in early April, all were vastly surprised when Cheng Ssu announced his departure for the province of his fathers, with no other purpose in view than to receive a bride over his ancestral threshold.

Before setting forth upon this ancient errand, our faithful cook spent half his year's savings in the giving of an elaborate feast to numerous friends and acquaintances. However, owing to the gratifying fact that many of his guests came with gifts of money, the host was partly reimbursed for his hospitality. But although Cheng Ssu had arranged his expenditures with this in view, the extra demands were such that the occasion of his marriage scratched the very bottom of his old brass savings bowl of copper cash, silver taels, and Mexican dollars. There were the bridal garments sent on ahead for the bride, new shoes and clothes for himself, new tassels for his long, glossy queue, a pretentious fan, and a long black-stemmed pipe—all these unusual expenditures coming when he was about to take a two-hundred li journey to another province, were enough to depress the stoutest heart.

However, one must be glad to spend upon a wed-

ding, and Cheng Ssu was off at last, almost nothing in his pocket, some newly contracted debts hanging over his head, but withal blithe in spirit.

Why should he not have been? Marriage celebrations, even in China, are joyous and often uproarious occasions. At that time families and clans, to the forty-ninth cousin, meet together and celebrate with music and feasting until either the board is prematurely swept clean or the guests are nigh to bursting. As for troublesome debts, Cheng Ssu held a steady position, and the Chinese New Year, when all debts are at least claimed, was far away.

Moreover, to Cheng Ssu there was the tremulous, joyous expectancy that his parents had selected a veritable treasure of a girl to be his companion through life; upon this chance he had fixed his hope.

But Cheng Ssu's aged and unconverted parents exhibited heathenish taste. In spite of their youngest son's request for a Christian wife, when the bride was carried over the family threshold and seated upon the brick k'ang, and Cheng Ssu timidly, even prayerfully, with trembling fingers lifted the heavy red veil from the small bowed head, he found —not a sweet faced young Christian, but as painted-up and sullen a little heathen as ever toddled upon bound feet.

Cheng Ssu's heart was sore and wroth within him. Cutting his vacation short, he gathered up his bride and her bundles and bade his undutiful parents fare-

well, and in exactly ten days after he had set forth, he was back again knocking at our gate.

Early that evening he brought his young bride in to pay her respects to his master and mistress. My heart sank when I beheld the companion he had drawn in the lottery of Chinese marriage. Cheng Ssu was a man mature for his thirty-three years, of excellent presence and countenance, and—unusual to his class—could read and write. The Scriptures he studied daily.

And the bride beside him! Barely seventeen, a small, untidy creature, ignorance and heathenism stamping every lineament, from the red-and-white painted face to the tiny bound feet upon which she swayed uncomfortably. Unfortunate Cheng Ssu! However, he bowed and smiled hardily, while the beholders marvelled at his heroic attitude in the face of what promised to be a lifelong calamity.

Heroic attitudes, however, have been known to lapse under the daily trial of unpleasant domestic life. Hereby is the most valiant spirit often sadly reduced, and Cheng Ssu's was not to be the shining exception.

It was no later than the last of May following his marriage that one morning our weekly accounting of kitchen expenses came to a sudden and startling end, as Cheng Ssu fairly flung out the words—"I can stand her no longer! I wish to be rid of her! She is the most ungrateful of heathen—she hates and

fears the foreigners—even those who have brought us the blessed Jesu doctrine! Oh, my mistress, this is what happens in a country where a man may not even see his wife until they are bound together and then, it is too late!

"And Wen Li hates every one around here—all the Jesu people. She hates even me," he continued. "Yes, she hates me most of all, because I, by force washed the paint from her face, combed her hair properly, and with old Wang Nai-nai's help, I unbound her feet. Moreover I daily command her to sit on the k'ang, while I read and explain the Jesu Doctrine to her. She hates all this in the most dishonourable fashion, but," he added, "as long as she eats out of my bowl, she shall be forced to hear the doctrine, and also to hear me pray."

"Cheng Ssu!" I expostulated. But Cheng Ssu was launched upon the full tide of his grievances and for a Chinese to pause in the midst of such a recital before his breath gives out, is not to be expected—so he continued louder and more vociferously.

"Last week she, the miserable one, refused to listen to the doctrine and in my righteous anger, I administered such chastisement as I have seen the honourable foreign parents give their sons!" Cheng Ssu's ferocious expression changed to the semblance of a grin as he placed his left palm upon his blue-clad knee, and smacked it smartly with his right.

I gazed upon him with severity. I was shocked

but not surprised, for a Chinese man may punish his wife as he will and Wen Li had certainly tried her lord and master.

My words were properly stern. "Cheng Ssu, your actions are unworthy a Christian and certainly unbecoming in a husband."

"That may be truly spoken according to foreign custom," Cheng Ssu remarked serenely, "but Chinese women often act like mules, and then they must be punished. Who would do it, if not their husbands? Now as for this worthless Wen Li, she has never since stuck her fingers in her ears when I read." At this point he brightened a little. "She is learning also to dress her own hair properly and her countenance is less of an ugliness since I cast away her red-and-white paints. She calls for these every day and is still very angry and says she will some day get more." The man's brow darkened again.

"I long to be rid of her!" he reiterated stubbornly. "I have had no peace of mind or heart since her chair was carried over my father's threshold." Cheng Ssu sighed a strangely wistful sigh. I glanced at him in surprise but he saluted suddenly and went back to his kitchen.

Several times before this, I had sought out Wen Li, only to be chilled by her cold and sullen demeanour. However, after this conversation I went again.

In appearance the little bride was much improved. Her garments were neat and clean, the untidy hair shone as beautiful and glossy as a raven's wing, and with the red-and-white paint removed her small oval face lighted with large, dark eyes, was not only "less of an ugliness," but surprisingly attractive. I realised suddenly that with a changed heart, Wen Li would be more than pretty. Old Wang Nai-nai, the nurse, went with me this day and while I essayed conversation, she sat on the brick floor beside the k'ang and rubbed healing ointment into Wen Li's sadly distorted little feet.

Sometimes the heathen girl showed a slight response to these friendly efforts, but never for long. It was as if finding herself on the verge of interest she deliberately threw herself back into a state of baffling stubbornness.

"The mistress knows," she remarked quite candidly, "that the poor Chinese maidens are sold and given away without their own consent. Considering this, is it not of an expectancy that they should hate their husbands? I hate mine," she calmly concluded.

"Shame!" cried old Wang Nai-nai. "Your husband, Cheng Ssu, is a good man—better than you deserve. He would be kinder than ten heathen husbands if only your wish was to please him. But for every smile you give him, you frown thrice."

Wen Li flushed rosy red then she laughed bitterly.

"I hate him because he is my master. I hate his Jesu doctrine which he is forever forcing upon my ears." Here she suddenly snatched her feet out of Wang Nai-nai's comforting hands and burst into a tempest of wrathful tears.

Soon after this painful scene, Cheng Ssu's attitude toward Wen Li changed. While providing for her material wants he ceased all instructing, laid no commands upon her and never sought her company. Otherwise he was the old prenuptial Cheng Ssu—cheery, diligent—his kitchen once more mellow with the talk and laughter of many friends.

During the first week of this strange behaviour upon Cheng Ssu's part, Wen Li rebound her feet and blossomed out again in an extravagant coating of red-and-white cosmetics. Cheng Ssu neither noticed nor opposed her. Two days passed and then suddenly, she scrubbed her paint off again and secretly besought old Wang Nai-nai for more ointments.

At this critical period in their married life, the terrible anti-foreign uprising of 1900 swept over China, drowning out individual woes. In the city of Peking it broke suddenly, overwhelmingly, the tide of danger rising until almost before we knew it the foreign residents and hundreds of native Christians were huddled together in the legation quarters, where for weeks they were besieged by Boxers and Imperial Chinese soldiers.

The day before this storm of anti-foreign wrath broke, Wen Li disappeared. "She has gone back to her heathen family and their gods—well and good!" said Cheng Ssu fiercely. "She left the word with that old worthless Chang the gatekeeper, she also said to tell me that Jesu would fail to protect me, and that I had better beseech her gods, the ancient ones." Cheng Ssu threw up his head defiantly—"Well, I wished to be rid of her—Let her go! Henceforth I shall not be bothered with painful thoughts by day and night."

If there were space, the record of Cheng Ssu's faithfulness and bravery during the awful weeks of siege would be inspiring to read. No service too hazardous, no task too menial, no day or night too long for his prompt and willing response. In those days under shot and shell, on rations little short of starvation, he lived out before men the teachings of the blessed Jesu doctrine, the plenteous fruition of scant hours of study.

But knowing a man through the years, one is able to read behind the veil of his countenance, so one day I asked, "What is it, Cheng Ssu—what is the secret unrest in your heart?"

"These are sorrowful days," answered Cheng Ssu slowly. "Our men and many of our small band of foreign soldiers are killed now every day; the children are starving and dying. Also our hospital house is now so full that one steps carefully between

the sick and wounded lying upon the floor and porches; the rice, coarse as it is, will soon be gone—only three more horses and mules remain to be eaten. Yesterday I saw an old, old Chinese man eating dried leaves—Does my mistress wonder that my heart is heavy?"

"Is this all?" I asked searchingly.

"Is it not more than sufficient?"

All the woe that Cheng Ssu had recited and far more, was true. A terrible and tragic end seemed impending over those of us who had survived the weeks of siege—but such was not to be! Two days after this conversation with Cheng Ssu the allied relief army entered Peking, relieved the besieged and set about punishing the offenders.

But before the echoes of the invading cannon had died away Cheng Ssu disappeared from our midst. Where—we could only painfully surmise. Unable to speak any language except Chinese and out in that turbulent mass of foreign soldiery bent upon vengeance, what awful fate might be his? But he was gone and neither search nor inquiry could produce any trace of him.

The fifth day after his disappearance, old Wang Nai-nai and I were walking out under the bullet-stripped trees. Now we spoke, and now we were silent, each wondering just how and where the threads of life were to be taken up again.

Suddenly old Wang Nai-nai stopped short and I

stared ahead unbelievingly—then I knew it was our lost Cheng Ssu approaching under the trees. Cheng Ssu, dirty, dishevelled, garments torn, feet bared to the ground, but a Cheng Ssu with head erect and as jubilant as the day he started forth to his marriage feast. And beside him, clinging to his supporting arm and coming as rapidly as her poor feet would bear her, walked Wen Li. Wen Li, paintless, her little face purified and lightened by grief and hardship, and something else, which at the moment I but dimly discerned.

"I found her," said Cheng Ssu simply, after our greetings had been exchanged. "I found her with that old Chang's heathen daughter over by the west city gate. In my heart I knew that she could never get far out of the city on her little feet—that is why I went at once when the troops came in. I searched far and wide for her until yesterday, and my heart knew no rest until I saw her weeping, just outside old Chang's daughter's gate." Here Cheng Ssu apparently forgot all about us, and gazed down upon Wen Li in loverlike but reprehensible Chinese fashion.

"Yes," said the new woman, Wen Li, "yes, Cheng Ssu actually searched for his base and worthless wife—for me who had never shown him aught but a wicked heart. I did plan to go back to my father's house, and a kind woman, fleeing also, carried me in her cart twenty li on the road thither. Then

suddenly something hard in my heart broke into little pieces and I knew that I must go back to my husband. I told the woman so. She cried, 'Fool! Fool!' but I left her and started back. The road was long and hard and none would carry me, for all were fleeing and none coming back. But at last I reached the city, and found refuge with old Chang's daughter. When the foreign soldiers came, I determined to seek Cheng Ssu. If only I could find him alive—I wanted to tell him how my heart had changed, and that he should teach—"

Here Cheng Ssu interrupted joyfully, "Yes, it is her wish now to study the Jesu truth, but—" he concluded magnanimously—"I long ago determined never to chastise her again, do what she would."

Wen Li smiled upward toward him with more than gratitude in her beautiful dark eyes. In reply, Cheng Ssu strove vainly for the proper Chinese indifference, while old Wang Nai-nai and I, beholding these things, knew that the world-old miracle had come to pass again.

XIII

THE PATH TO LIGHT

PART I

LITTLE CHER LIN spied it first from the faded green tiles of his grandfather's hut. High up there on the crumbling roof, swimming in the sunlight and the mere length of a gull's wing beyond range of Ta Fu-chin's * old eyes, Cher Lin was stealing a few precious moments for himself. As for Ta Fu-chin's harsh and authoritative old voice, did not even the robber crows delving in the cornfield know that if Cher Lin heeded his every call, there would never be a millet's grain of time for those other voices, voices of wind and wave, whispering to him of wonderful lands and strange peoples far beyond the dim line where the blue green waters of the gulf faded mistily into the colourless sky above?

And it was up there this sunshiny afternoon, his black eyes resting dreamily upon the shimmering gulf, ears attuned to every wave-borne murmur,

* Ta Fu-chin—grandfather.

brown body naked save for his rag of a shirt, that Cher Lin first glimpsed the strange derelict—a tiny boat dipping and curtseying upon the incoming waves like a polite little guest.

Trembling, Cher Lin rose to his slender height, shaded his eyes for a second, then one flying leap, and like a bit of thistledown he touched ground and skimmed off down the path through the rustling corn to the shore below. And behold the race to the swift, for there was Cher Lin with bare feet in the waves all eager and waiting for that errant barque, a coquettish young thing that advanced and then seemingly retreated upon the waves.

Not for Cher Lin, however, the lure of these feminine tactics. Moreover, he had no desire to behold such a treasure swept seaward again, and dashing into the water he swam out and gently pushed the little boat to land.

And truly no stranger nor quainter craft was ever beheld upon that sandy strip of gulf shore: assuredly it was a new fashion in boats. However, that might easily be, for fisher folk had to do mostly with old things, old ways and customs, old men living in still older huts, old weather-beaten boats and old nets always being mended—but never staying mended. Indeed, Cher Lin himself, the flapping fish, and the circling gulls, were the only new and vastly alive things within ten li of stern old Ta Fu-chin's fishing ground.

But hi-yi now, what rapture! Cher Lin clapped his wet hands joyously and surveyed his salvage. Flat-bottomed it stood and barren of any seat, all its lines squarish instead of round, but this austerity of outline was more than atoned for by the birds and dragons which circled in carved splendour from the larger end of the boat around the narrower stern and back again. And this was not all, for there were actually flecks of gold still glinting down between the dragon scales, with here and there a touch of dingy blue upon a bird's wing. Hi-yi, what if Cher Lin did feel some disappointment because of the boat's small size, he felt certain that by kneeling he could paddle about in the shallow waters of the cove. The joy of possession seized Cher Lin, and already he loved the little derelict better than his pagoda built of shining pebbles or even his big whispering shell. It was his own! Little Cher Lin reached out to lay his brown hand caressingly upon the carved dragon —but alas, at this happy moment Old Cheng—and who ever heard him come stealing over the sands? —reached little Cher Lin and his wonder boat, and just as the dragon felt the touch of that loving brown hand, Old Cheng jerked Cher Lin roughly back and away. "Hi-yi! What's this?" he croaked loudly. "May the gods save me if it isn't a coffin—a beautiful coffin! But alack, I fear 'tis too small for me." Here Old Cheng bent over Cher Lin's precious salvage with avaricious eyes. "Alack!" he croaked

again as he straightened up, a queer, gaunt figure in faded blue garments. "Bad luck, I say, for 'tis clean as wind and water can sweep it. Not one jewel, no smallest bit of jade—yet withal, a prince's coffin, for behold the golden dragon! Hi yi, that only it was long enough for me to lie in, in splendour at the last!" With this, Old Cheng endeavoured to crowd himself down into the erstwhile little boat, while Cher Lin, startled and resentful, watched him bend and twist and heard his old joints creak horribly in a vain attempt to force himself completely inside.

"Alack!" the old man mourned again, "such good fortune is not for me, my body must be wrapped in a poor man's mat, but—" and here a wonderful idea struck old Ta Fu-chin—"of a truth, Cher Lin, 'twould serve for you!"

Cher Lin fell back aghast. "But I do not want a coffin—why should I need a coffin?" he stammered fearfully.

"Not to-day, not to-morrow, not next week maybe," Old Cheng rasped comfortingly, "but who knows what day, what hour you will need one—and surely never before was a poor youth provided with so fine a coffin." Then lifting his old dishevelled head, he cried in a loud voice, "If the gods have sent this to me, I shall accept it most graciously."

Then back to his usual croak, Ta Fu-chin continued: "You, Cher Lin, lift the small end and

we'll carry our new-found treasure to the house. Once there it shall be safely hidden under the k'ang, away from curious and envious eyes—Hi-yi, what luck for a poor fisherman!"

"No fish to-day, no fish to-day,
I caught upon the sea,
And yet mayhap upon this day,
The gods have favoured me!"

Old Cheng's singing was vastly more unpleasant than his speech, and he rasped out this rare melody over and over as he and Cher Lin went back along the friendly little path through the rustling corn, Cher Lin's feet lagging and his young heart weighted with sad foreboding.

"A coffin, not a boat! The quaintly carved derelict, not a playtime craft, but a wooden shroud, something for the dead!" A primeval instinct of life rose up suddenly and overwhelmingly in Cher Lin, and only long habit of obedience held him to his end of the hateful burden, as they bore it into the house and pushed it carefully underneath the k'ang.

And there day after day in humble darkness, but security, the prince's casket rested; Old Cheng often dragging it forth by candlelight to gloat upon its richness and lament anew its small dimensions.

Cher Lin came to dread these occasions more and more. Daylight was bad enough, for Cher Lin

knew that it was there beneath his brick bed, but the nights were worse. Once, in days before the coming of the casket, Cher Lin had no sooner rolled up in his tattered old comforter than he was fast asleep; now he dreaded the bedtime hour infinitely, and often after old Ta Fu-chin lay quiet, Cher Lin would roll softly off the k'ang down upon the mud brick floor; here he could sleep, for there was no horrid coffin yawning expectantly underneath him.

Hi-yi, how different a Cher Lin had roamed the gulf shore in those long past summer days! Then he had carolled happy as a bird, as he watched the gulls in their flight, dragged home the driftwood and fagots against the winter's need, sorted out the beautiful shells, climbed the green hills in whose leafy coverts he had communed happily with birds and squirrels! Then there had been also long evenings when in Ta Fu-chin's old boat, he had drifted about under a low-hung golden moon, or by candlelight had bent his head over intricate Chinese characters. Yes, Ambition had once claimed Cher Lin; he had meant to be a scholar and a man of note—even a fisher lad might hope for that in China. Had not his own old grandfather a nephew who had risen from the fish nets to be the most honourable ruler of one of the great Chinese provinces? Ah, yes, these wonders of future accomplishment all had seemed possible then: dreams of knowledge, power and wealth, while every dawn brought with it life,

warm, pulsating, joyful—ah—those long, glad days were almost forgotten now.

Poor little Cher Lin! Haunting thoughts of that dark object beneath his bed held him back from all endeavour, crushed every incentive. Joyous action and happy plans fell cold and dead before the ominous shadow which, creeping out from beneath the k'ang, overflowed the hut and spread its sinister length even upon the shining beach.

What use to gather fagots that might never warm him? Why lie long golden moments upon the tiles dreaming of far lands and high achievements, when to-morrow he might be lying in the Thing itself? Truly, like poor Sinbad, the Sailor, choked, hampered and almost bent to earth, by the strangling hold and deadly weight of the Old Man of the Sea, so was little Cher Lin crushed and utterly disheartened by the malign suggestion ever near him

Alas, waking or sleeping, woeful fear and apprehension, morbid ideas and dreams unfit for a growing boy, oppressed Cher Lin. And grow—how could he grow with thoughts of death forever quenching instincts of life and joy? Small wonder then, that in the early fall Cher Lin began to waste away and to wander listlessly about. Even old Ta Fu-chin noted this and whispered to himself—"What's amiss with the lad?"

However, Ta Fu-chin had not long to wonder

about Cher Lin. With the next day's sun came a runner, brown-skinned and fleet of foot; down over the hills he ran, through the barren cornfield and straight to old Ta Fu-chin's door.

And such a message, nay, rather a command, as he brought with a bag of silver taels to back it up! In short, Ta Fu-chin, as eldest of the clan of Cheng, was summoned to his grandnephew's wedding. This young kinsman lived two hundred li distant and his father begged that his most ancient and honourable uncle would grace the wedding festivities with his revered presence.

Would Ta Fu-chin go? Well, yes! Something adventurous stirred the warped strings of his old heart and trembling with excitement but all attuned to the summons, Ta Fu-chin set forth upon the great adventure of his life.

However, he did not leave without laying a solemn injunction upon his grandson—Cher Lin might stay with the aged Ku and his grandson down the coast, but he was thrice weekly to visit their own hut and to guard well the treasure under the k'ang.

And Cher Lin, within twenty-four hours after old Ta Fu-chin had set forth upon his journey, found that life could still be good.

That very first day, he had moved his pei-wa,* his bowl and bag of rice, even his brush and ink cake

* Pei-wa—cotton mattress.

down the gulf shore to Old Ku and Ku's grandson, Jung Ping.

Now Old Ku might look aged but he still held a warm heart for boys. And Jung Ping! Cher Lin had never met such an astonishing young person—such mirth, such quips, quirks and monkeyshines, and strangely enough, within a week Cher Lin matched all his young host's merry nonsense.

Those winter days might often be cold and grey, but like beads of priceless jade upon an all too slender string, they fairly slipped away. Wonderful days filled with joyous activity and even more wonderful nights, for then it was that Wang, the versatile young fisherman from his hut near by, came tapping at their latticed door.

And Wang—who could measure his marvellous charm? His brilliant black eyes shining even in the candlelight, his mane of black hair never half braided, the heroic figure of him as, striding up and down the shadowy hut and brandishing a rusty spear, he enacted fabulous tales or wrought out strange history for Grandfather Ku and the fascinated boys huddled together on the k'ang. Aye, those were worth-while days and nights—weeks and months of them!

* * * *

Late spring was warming the air. Old Ku and the boys were returning every dawn with their boat-

load of fish, the farmers back on the hillside already sat by night in their little watchtowers guarding their sprouting grain. All the great symphony of spring was on in full chorus when Old Cheng suddenly appeared to claim his grandson.

Ta Fu-chin had departed in old blue cotton garments. Now he stood arrayed in silk so fine and grand that at first Cher Lin scarcely recognised him. Then Cher Lin's heart sank as he recalled the hateful object under the k'ang. He remembered also that after closing the door upon it for the first time he had never visited the hut again; so it was with lagging feet and heavy heart that he followed his grandfather home. For some reason, Cheng failed to inquire how Cher Lin had performed the obnoxious duty left with him six months previous: this however, did not lighten the boy's heart, for he did not dread punishment so much as being housed up again with the baneful Thing itself.

"Hi-yi," croaked old Ta Fu-chin that night, back into his old blue fishing rags and bolstered up against his pei-wa. "Hi-yi, 'tis many a moon since I drew so sweet a pipe!"

Cher Lin surveyed him hopefully— Could it be that Ta Fu-chin had forgotten what was hidden beneath the k'ang?

But he had not.

At the end of three pipes he commanded suddenly, "Now, Cher Lin, bring forth our treasure."

And Cher Lin, burning and chilling, dragged out the coffin, and as it jolted over the mud-brick floor, it creaked and jarred, each sound a blow from which the boy shrank visibly.

"Hi yi!—What's wrong, Cher Lin? Climb into it and we'll see how the measure goes—get in, I say!"

Cringing and terrified, Cher Lin stepped into the prince's casket.

"Lie down! Lie down!" Old Cheng's tones were loud and threatening.

Trembling, Cher Lin dropped to his knees and began to stretch himself out, began, but never finished, for something had happened—the warm blood of life like a golden flood swept suddenly through his icy veins.

"Push yourself down, squeeze yourself in!" screamed Old Cheng, shaking as with an ague.

"I cannot, I cannot, my grandfather!" shouted Cher Lin. "My bones, my body, my flesh have all swelled in your long absence—I have *outgrown* the coffin!"

Astonishing as were the words, they were true! And no sooner were they uttered than there was revealed to Cher Lin something which he had thought gone forever—Ta Fu-chin still loved him. For with Cher Lin's last cry, old Cheng arose to his full, gaunt height, stretched out his arms and cried brokenly:

"Now shall I sleep in peace again, for this coffin was never meant for you! I thought that the gods had sent it and did not dare refuse it—but they have not called you, son of my son—little son of my old age!"

With these words the old man actually threw his arms around Cher Lin and held him close for a long moment. But even as he released him, Ta Fu-chin's ever-thrifty soul asserted itself.

"Now, Cher Lin, thank the gods, we neither need nor desire this unwelcome gift, therefore, I shall sell it. Old Ku has many young grandsons and he could do worse than buy this casket against the chance of the gods calling one of them. I shall offer it to him at a rare price, and do you early in the morning drag it down to the beach, where the full sun will show forth all its richness! A few strings of cash are always welcome," Ta Fu-chin continued sagely, "and you and I, Cher Lin, may need to fish yet a little longer, but only a few moons at the most for my nephew, your honourable uncle who sits in council with the rulers, has other fine plans for you and for me."

But Cher Lin scarcely heard his grandfather. The casket was not for him! He, Cher Lin, would never use the abhorred object! This thought ran joyfully through his mind whilst he and old Cheng carried the prince's coffin outside into the tiny court-yard. And it was still singing in his heart when,

the next morning, he wakened to do Ta Fu-chin's bidding. And if Cher Lin's heart sang, his fingers fairly trembled as he fastened an old rope through a tiny hole in the dragon's head and dragged the carved box roughly down to the gulf shore.

Arriving there he surveyed it with hostile eyes, clenching his hand suddenly as his grandfather's words came back to him. Suppose Old Ku should buy it for one of his grandsons—maybe for Jung Ping? Poor Jung Ping—he must suffer then just as he, Cher Lin, had suffered! And if Jung Ping should outgrow it, the horrid thing might be passed on and on to endless boys, strangling every ambition, crushing every joy, always haunting some poor lad by day and night as it had haunted him!

With these dread forebodings, a sudden purpose shaped itself in Cher Lin's mind. Near him lay a heavy club-shaped stone. Seizing this, he beat upon the casket until the carved ends and sides flattened out upon the wet sand like sheets of printed characters. But Cher Lin's task was not yet finished; it was early morning and the tide running swiftly seaward. "What a chance to rid the world of boys once and forever of that sinister object!" Throwing off his faded blue garment and picking up an old oar, he drove the demolished coffin far out into the running tide—another vigorous push and it was off. Heigh-ho, how eagerly the waves seized upon it, throwing their green-white mantle over and

around it, and spurting up through its gaping cracks. Best of all, how they would take it and dash it upon the rocks where the gulf widened into the sea!

Scurrying back to shore, Cher Lin climbed hastily up on a huge boulder; from the top of this he could see far out across the gulf. There on the rock, shading his eyes from the rising sun, he danced and shouted with glee as the waves swept the prince's casket onward to its doom. Then strangely, with his last glimpse of it, a mighty surge of feeling arose in Cher Lin's young heart—Fear of punishment had no place in the new emotion: merely the hopes and ambitions of the long ago had returned to their old place in his heart and mind.

'Books and learning—ah, he would have them now! The great world, he would behold it—and distant lands he would visit—such far countries as Wang had told about over the glowing charcoal in Old Ku's friendly hut!'

While these mighty resolves thrilled him, the sun changed from red to brilliant gold. It flung itself boldly upon the pinnacle of rock whereon Cher Lin stood in beautiful nakedness, his brown skin glistening from the waves, his head uplifted, eyes shining and eager, grimy little hands outstretched toward the unknown beckoning future.

XIV

THE PATH TO LIGHT

PART II

LONG, bright summer months they were that flew happily over Cher Lin's young head. So filled were they with boyish interests that he almost forgot the prince's casket which for long weeks had shadowed his days by its presence in his grandfather's hut. As for the swift chastisement administered by old Ta Fu-chin when he learned that Cher Lin had demolished the coffin, even the memory of it was obliterated by the joyous days that followed. These were ample recompense for any fleshly stings, and were really much like the golden sands which rolling in with the tide, covered over all ugly débris on the gulf shore.

Late summer came again; the tender rustle of the corn had changed to a faint crackling sigh whenever the wind touched it. Swiftly then Ta Fu-chin and Cher Lin stripped the corn from the stalks. But even while he did this, old Ta Fu-chin would pause, shade his fading eyes and peer anxiously along the path which trailed away over the hilltops.

Then one day, when he was not looking at all, came the expected messenger from his Honourable Nephew. Brown-skinned and fleet of foot was this runner, and as the last messenger had done, he came straight to Ta Fu-chin's door. He too, brought silver taels, but his summons this time was more portentous than the last. Nothing more nor less was it than that within two days, the carts would arrive which were to carry Ta Fu-chin and Cher Lin to their future home in the great city of Peking.

This news started a perfect furor in Ta Fu-chin's smoky hut. At first the thought of departure brought only joy; then suddenly the old man's delight in going was changed to sadness. From far and near along the gulf shore and from the fields behind on the hillside, came old friends and acquaintances to say farewell. And this was not all—how could he leave his precious boat, his old nets, his ancient smoke-grimed pots and seamy bowls? More than once he was tempted to send stern refusal back to Peking, but a glance at Cher Lin's happy face always dissuaded him. For Cher Lin moved about on clouds of joy. His hope, his dream, his chance, hung like a golden apple of promise almost within his reach! Of Ta Fu-chin's rending ties the boy had no conception. Certainly it caused a tender pain to leave the gulf shore, the circling gulls, the old boat, but were there not other gulls and other boats elsewhere in the world? As for the murmur-

ing waves, he was not leaving them behind, for his big whispering shell was safely packed with his brush and ink cake. He could hear the waves any time he wished by merely pressing the shell's pink hollow against his ear. After all, what allure did these old things hold, compared to the new, bright world which lay ahead of him?

Those two days of waiting were overlong for Cher Lin, but at last the carts came, ponderous, brass-trimmed affairs with uniformed drivers, rumbling solemnly up to Ta Fu-chin's humble door. Cher Lin felt abashed by such unaccustomed splendour, but Ta Fu-chin, if he had any qualms, gave no sign of them, as he cast off his rags and hastily donned the silken wedding garments which he had worn home from his grandnephew's wedding. Cher Lin watching him slip into all this grandeur, felt ashamed of his own ragged state, but before the last of Ta Fu-chin's robes were adjusted to his satisfaction there came a tap at the door and a smiling carter handed in a little chest. In this chest were new garments for Cher Lin: when arrayed in these, and helped out in the mystery of buttons by the friendly carter, Cher Lin, in so far as the outer layer was concerned, presented the appearance of a handsome, well-clothed lad.

New dignity came upon him with his new garments, and only once did he waver. This was when seated like a young prince in his cart and rumbling

along upon the climbing road, his friend Jung Ping slipped from the cart-front saying, "I can accompany you no farther." Then, clasping his brown hands while tears streaked his face, he added, "My heart will long for you, Cher Lin—do not forget your friend Jung Ping, left without a playmate here on the lonely gulf shore!"

Cher Lin, with a lump in his throat that would not go down, might have wept at parting with his friend, had not a great idea struck him: "I'll send for you, Jung Ping. If I have my chance, I'll share it with you!" At that, the smiling carter cracked his long whip and they were off, leaving Jung Ping, a pathetic little figure, his face pressed suddenly against the rough bark of a roadside tree.

Five days they journeyed—bright, wonderful days, in which Cher Lin saw more of the world than he ever had dreamed of seeing.

His Ta Fu-chin rode ahead, and he it was who led an old man's discourse under that blue canvas canopy. But in Cher Lin's cart all was different. There, as they creaked along, he asked questions innumerable, all of which the friendly and intelligent carter endeavoured to answer.

This carter, it seemed, was a peculiar fellow, of a sect and disposition quite different from the one ahead. He was, he told Cher Lin, "a humble follower of Jesu."

"Who was this Jesu?"

"Why, Jesu was the Son of God, who came to save sinners; did not Cher Lin know that all men were sinners?"

Ah, yes, Cher Lin knew that, but did not Ku, the carter, mean "gods"?

No, he meant "God." The Jesu doctrine taught that there was only one true God. "Only one god!" —that was strange, indeed, although Cher Lin confessed that it was a much simpler arrangement than having such an array of gods.

"Tell me of this man Jesu; was he ever a young boy like me?" asked the wondering Cher Lin.

"Ah, yes!" and then in simple language but with glowing countenance, Ku, the carter, told the heathen boy the story of Jesu. Over and over he told it in various phases during the five days of that wonderful journey. And that was not all, for like one entranced, Cher Lin listened to the story of Joseph, and heard the stories of little Samuel in the temple and of the Prodigal Son.

Marvellous tales were those that fell from Ku's eloquent lips, but surely they had the ring of truth in them.

At last the journey neared its end, and shortly after noon of the fifth day the great bulk of the Peking walls loomed against the sky.

One by one the main roads and dusty country paths merged into a long, narrow highway. Now must the carters drive dexterously through this high-

way crush—caravans of fur-laden camels, balky donkeys, swarming dogs, and produce-laden country carts. Nevertheless, Ku and his companion carter kept well together, and just before sundown the heavy carts rolled through the gates of Peking.

Once upon the city street, Ta Fu-chin allowed his carter to lower the gauze curtain over the front of the cart, the carter hinting that the reverend uncle of such an honorable mandarin should seek seclusion from the public gaze. And Ta Fu-chin although consumed with curiosity, was not the one who would offend Chinese custom.

In Cher Lin's cart, Ku neglected to lower the curtain, and the young Chinese lad leaned far out over the flattened dashboard, which also served as Ku's seat. Nothing like the passing show upon that great city street had Cher Lin ever beheld.

And such was the first glimpse that Honourable Cheng Darin had of his young kinsman, a slender lad leaning forward intently, eager young face, squarish chin, dark, earnest eyes—Cher Lin's whole attitude one of intense interest; but no noisy ejaculations, no gestures. Ah, "a son would Cheng Darin make of this lad, now that his own boy had removed to a distant province!"

* * * *

As for Cher Lin everything seemed most desirable, although he soon found that if his dreams were to come true, he would have to work for them.

After the first two weeks of holiday, the best of teachers were engaged and Cher Lin found almost more study than even he coveted. His teachers, however, were delighted with so apt a pupil and redoubled their efforts to instruct him, not thinking of the effect so much intensive study might have upon a hitherto untrained mind.

Indeed, there were times when Cher Lin felt that his head would burst with so much studying. And so, to lighten the tension a little, often he sought out Ku, the friendly carter. In Ku's quarters he always found life, laughter and good fellowship, for Ku was very popular among Cheng Darin's fifty servants and retainers. But to Cher Lin's mind, the best times of all were when he happened to find Ku alone; all of Cher Lin's cares then seemed to leave him. Dead old axioms and historic classics were forgotten while Ku told over again those ever-living stories of Jesu.

On one such night, Cheng Darin came in upon them and great was his anger. White-faced and harsh of voice he ordered Cher Lin to his room and dismissed Ku from his service. Not without a qualm, however, did he do this for Ku was the one honest man in his employ.

Thereafter was little Cher Lin tended and forced like a hothouse plant. Too much study with too little exercise soon brought results; Cher Lin grew thin and hollow-eyed. Worst of all, his dreams

seemed to be fading and there was no longer any light shining at the end of the long road he was travelling. Old Ta Fu-chin at length noted his pallor and upon Cheng Darin's return from a journey, sternly called his attention to the boy's appearance.

"He needs more out of doors," commented Cheng Darin thoughtfully. "He shall have a fine mule and ride with me."

And so it happened that within a few days Cher Lin was riding hither and thither over the old city of Peking. In these rides there was much of interest, but he must always ride in state, and according to the rigid Chinese etiquette, he must turn neither to the right nor to the left. Thus in a short time these ceremonial excursions palled upon the shore-bred boy, and he grew homesick for some of the very things which he had once belittled— "Oh, for a sail in Ta Fu-chin's old boat, for a touch of the mouldy nets, a swim in the blue waters of the gulf, or a race with the wind and the feel of his ragged garment flapping against his bare legs—Ah, such happiness had vanished forever!" And worst of all, when would there ever be any chance of sharing his opportunities with Jung Ping? His uncle was fine and generous, his aunt kindly but ceremonious, Ta Fu-chin well-meaning but old. Cher Lin was pining for some one like Jung Ping, a boy to play with; one

also who would share his hopes and aspirations. Then there was Ku! He would give his big whispering shell to have the carter back again, and to hear once more the story of Jesu and little Joseph. Often Cher Lin thought of the little Jesu book which Ku had given him, but which he did not dare to read.

All these sad thoughts filled his mind one day, as mounted upon his mule, he followed Cheng Darin along the great city street. Tears blurred his eyes when, as through their mist he espied Ku standing just below him on the dirt sidewalk. And best of all, Ku saw him and doubtless would have waved his hand in greeting, if at that moment there had not sounded a terrible cry of alarm, and the street traffic swept back upon Cher Lin. After that he had little recollection save of his own mule stumbling and rolling, a swift glimpse of Ku's frantic face and then darkness.

When Cher Lin awakened three hours later to a world of pain, bandages and queer odours, he was lying in a little white bed, with strange faces bending over him—white faces. Then gradually he comprehended his uncle standing at the foot of the bed, and at the door was his old friend, Ku, anxious-faced but manœuvring a smile for Cher Lin's first waking moment. This was the mission hospital.

Cher Lin tried to return this smile but failed. He could only lie there, gazing at Ku very solemnly

while two big tears welled up in his eyes. Then suddenly he heard his honourable uncle, Cheng Darin, speak in strange, husky tones:

"I implore the honourable Tai-fu, that he will allow that man standing at the door to come in whenever my nephew"—for so he was pleased to call Cher Lin—"is able and desires to see him. He is a good fellow and this boy is fond of him."

"Yes, but not for several days yet," replied the physician quietly. "If all goes well, he may come in to speak to him upon the fourth or fifth day."

Ku held back until the fifth day, then he came and stood respectfully by one side of Cher Lin's bed while Cheng Darin and old Ta Fu-chin sat by the other.

"Be seated," commanded Cheng Darin kindly.

Ku bowed low to be thus honoured, and sat down hesitatingly in the presence of his superiors. There was, however, no hesitation about the smile he flashed into Cher Lin's welcoming eyes.

"My nephew may not converse yet," announced Cheng Darin, "but he desires that you read to him from the little Jesu book. Such diversion I shall allow while he is here, for this is a Jesu hospital, and I will admit that there is no other like it in all the Empire. So while we are indebted to the skillful physician, we shall not say aught against their peculiar doctrine—read now!"

"What shall I read?" inquired Ku, his eyes seek-

ing Cher Lin's and drawing a small book from his blue garment.

"Joseph," murmured the sick boy faintly.

"He always so often wants to hear the Joseph story," explained Ku, smiling. And there, in that little white hospital room into which the odours of almond and rose tree drifted, with old Ta Fu-chin and Honourable Uncle sitting tolerantly at one side of the bed, the humble carter reverently opened the little black Book and read once again the old, old story of Joseph.

It had been Cheng Darin's intention to steal quietly out with Ta Fu-chin as soon as the reading began, but before they knew it, little Joseph had been placed in the pit by his cruel brothers, and then of necessity they must see what would happen next. Then—but why tell what every one must guess—they remained until the cruel brothers came begging for food from Joseph, the rich and powerful governor of the land. Ha! How Cheng Darin rejoiced that Joseph did not soften all at once, and how loud was Ta Fu-chin's sigh of relief when Joseph and his old father were at last folded in each other's arms! Thus, almost before they knew it, the story of Joseph was finished and little Cher Lin was smiling radiantly, first at Ku for the reading of it, and then at his old Ta Fu-chin and his Honourable Uncle, who both sat there looking a trifle sheepish for having been so enthralled by an ancient, old world tale.

Well, to shorten the story, Ku came every day after that, and strangely enough, Ta Fu-chin and Honourable Uncle Cheng always happened in at the same time. Stranger still, they always sat quietly intent throughout the telling of Ku's Bible stories and to the carter's words about Jesu and the Jesu doctrine.

At the end of the third week Cheng Darin turned suddenly to Ku. "In two more days I shall take my nephew home, so do you hasten at once to prepare our finest cart. Make it soft with robes and cushions, and be sure that you drive carefully!"

Ku opened his lips to voice his astonishment, then thought better of it and closed them, bowed low, and departed. He would have been a dull fellow indeed, had he not known that once again he was in Cheng Darin's employ.

Two days later, when they came for Cher Lin, they found him almost himself again but seated in a wheeled chair in the adjoining courtyard. This compound contained the boys' school, and Cher Lin sat there smiling happily, a faint rosy colour drifting into his pale cheeks as a throng of bright-faced lads played all around him.

The foreign physician stood by Cher Lin's chair and greeted Cheng Darin courteously, but Cher Lin cried out imploringly to his uncle. "Oh, my most Honourable Uncle, graciously permit me to remain in this place and go to this school! Oh, such won-

derful learning is here acquired, and best of all, here could I play with boys of my own age, and maybe," Cher Lin hesitated, "maybe there might be a place here for Jung Ping."

"And who is Jung Ping?" inquired the doctor smilingly.

Cher Lin's face glowed as he answered. "Jung Ping is my friend who lives on the gulf shore, and while I am having my chance here in this great city with my kind and gracious uncle, Jung Ping has none at all where he lives. If only both he and I could come here, how happily we could live and learn together! Why, Jung Ping has never even heard the story of Joseph or of Jesu!"

At this, the Tai-fu glanced quickly at Cheng Darin —the mandarin's face had settled into rigid lines. Nevertheless, Cheng Darin spoke courteously:

"I must confess," he admitted, "that your Western learning appeals to me, and but for this unfortunate Jesu doctrine which you teach, I might allow my nephew to remain here and study. But," he continued with sharp decision, "my revered uncle, this boy's grandfather, would never permit a member of the house of Cheng to desert our own gods for one that we know not of!"

"Possibly my Ta Fu-chin does not know much of this place—if he would only consider how I could gain more and more book knowledge all the time for—" but right here Cher Lin's beseeching young

voice was drowned by Ta Fu-Chin's eager, rasping tones, for he had come upon them quite unobserved.

"Yes—and I, too, know of this Jesu, the only one and true God. Have I not hearkened every day during these weeks, not alone to the wondrous tales of Ku, the carter, but also long hours have I sat in the hospital chapel, hearing the words of truth from the lips of Pastor Wang? My heart accepts them as the truth.

"I am eldest of the clan of Cheng, and my days will soon be spent. Never until this time have I seen aught save darkness at its end, but now I ask myself, 'Shall Cher Lin follow after me to this same darkness—or shall he begin with the Light that shines for me now at my journey's end?' "

And before any one else could answer, Cher Lin reached out and caught his grandfather's hand.

"But now, dear Ta Fu-chin," he cried softly, "the way is no longer dark for you and me—for our feet are set on the path to Light.—Oh, most Honourable Uncle," he implored, turning to the mandarin, "help us to make it shine for other boys!"

And God must have softened Cheng Darin's proud heart that day, for he could only stand quite still and gaze at little Cher Lin. When he spoke his voice trembled.

"Most Honourable Tai-fu, with your gracious permission, when this little boy is well again he shall return to this school, and his friend, Jung Ping, shall

accompany him—I will send for him at once. Also, if Cher Lin so desires, he may learn more of this Jesu doctrine—*for who* am I that I should stand against the eldest and the youngest of the house of Cheng?"

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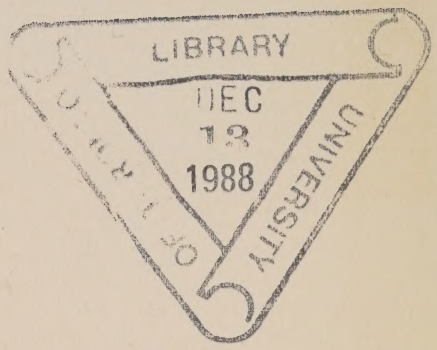
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